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the weekly

# Standard

FEBRUARY 27, 2017

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## THE FACE- OFF

**REUEL MARC GERECHT**  
on Trump and Iran

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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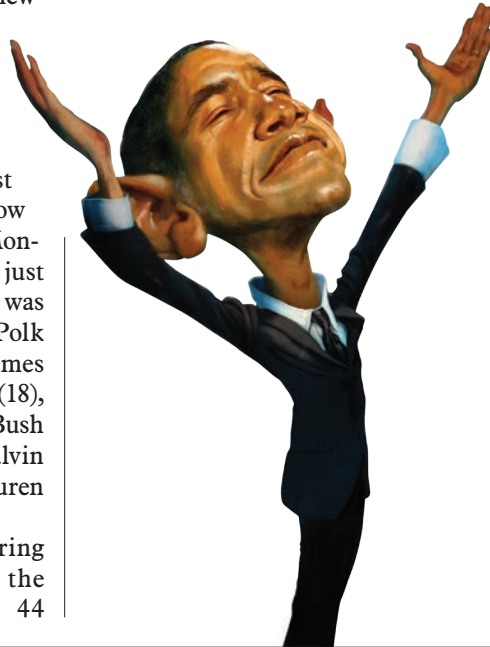
# The Better-than-Monroe Doctrine

Up to now, THE SCRAPBOOK has looked skeptically at rankings of presidents by historians. They tend to be biased, trendy, superficial, and based on no little myth. The only thing worse than getting historians—liberals, for the most part—to do the ordering would be to ask sociologists. Yet we couldn't resist C-SPAN's newest version of its "Historians Survey of Presidential Leadership," as it marks the first time Barack Obama is included in the rankings.

He arrives as the twelfth-best president, right behind Woodrow Wilson and just ahead of James Monroe. That's a mite high. But it's just right so long as you think Obama was a better president than James Polk (14), William McKinley (16), James Madison (17), Andrew Jackson (18), John Adams (19), George H. W. Bush (20), John Quincy Adams (21), Calvin Coolidge (27), and Martin Van Buren (34). After all, historians say so.

Obama achieved this by scoring extremely high in three of the categories: third among our 44

former presidents on "pursued equal justice for all"; seventh on "moral authority"; and eighth on "economic management." One could quibble on justice and moral standing. But eighth-best on the economy? That puts him ahead of Ronald Reagan on that measure—the historians rank the



Gipper 16th on handling the economy.

THE SCRAPBOOK has long suspected historians of economic illiteracy. And now we have proof. They must believe the fairy tale about Obama having kept us out of a second Great Depression. In truth, he delivered the weakest recovery from a recession since World War II—perhaps ever. Americans quit the job market in droves or settled for part-time jobs. Compare that with the surging economy and "morning in America" that Reaganomics produced.

The biggest loser in C-SPAN's third listing of executive greatness was Andrew Jackson, who dropped from thirteenth in the 2009 rankings to eighteenth this year. He used to be The Founder of the Democratic Party. Now he's The Pariah of the Democratic Party. Jackson was a slaveholder, but the 91 historians in the survey didn't seem to hold that against him before. Thomas Jefferson remained seventh (notwithstanding his own slaveholding and the beating he took in the musical *Hamilton*).

Lincoln and Washington remain first and second. As for the Roosevelts, Franklin was third and Teddy fourth. The years are proving kind to Dwight Eisenhower—No. 9 in 2000, he is No. 5 now—and LBJ, who went from No. 11 to No. 10. Less so to Harry Truman, who slipped from an overrated No. 5 to a still-overrated No. 6. JFK fell from No. 6 to No. 8. George W. Bush jumped from No. 36 in 2009 to No. 33 in the new rankings. That still leaves him behind bumbling Jimmy Carter, who declined from 22nd place in 2000 to 26th now.

Reagan, who was at No. 11 in 2000, has since risen, in historians' estimation, to No. 9. Like Ike, he has the momentum. ♦

## Principle of Non-Contradiction Dept.

*FiveThirtyEight.com*



CONGRESS

**So Far, No One Is Crossing The Aisle In The Trump Era**

*FiveThirtyEight.com, same day*



CONGRESS

**A Q&A With The House Democrat Who's Voted With Trump 75 Percent Of The Time**

## Berets Berated

Berets—it's been some time since they were just for baguette-toting Frenchmen and elite members of the Army's Special Forces. In the

summer of 2001, the Army changed longstanding policy and began to put berets on every head. The logic was simple—*everyone* should be made to feel special, not just Special Forces. It was the military-morale version of our infantile participation-trophy culture.

Soldiers knew silly p.c. antics when they saw them. The *Army Times* recently conducted a survey of soldiers regarding what they liked and didn't like about their uniforms. Overwhelmingly, they said get rid of the berets. Or at least reserve them for just a few special classes: actual Special Forces, Rangers, Airborne, and the elite Painters Corps, to wear with their smocks and pencil-thin mustachios. (Okay, THE SCRAPBOOK made up that last one.)

There was pushback right from the start, and so years ago the Army replaced, for wear with combat uniforms, the beret with the more practical and less contentious flat-topped, baseball-billed “patrol cap.” But the beret remains the default headgear for the dressier “Army Service Uniform.” It's a measure of just how hated the black beret is that soldiers don't even want it for those rare occasions when they break out their blue suits.



Not a bad look

Other survey results were intriguing. For example, soldiers want to be able to grow beards, which might be mistaken as an alarming sign the armed forces are being infiltrated by radical Islamic fundamentalists or, worse, hipsters. But in a way, beards are the new berets. The men who wear beards now are the ones out in the field, fighting in inhospitable countries. A few weeks' growth on the chin is a surer sign of stern stuff than a combat ribbon on the chest. Which is why soldiers are wrong to want to be able to wear beards at their leisure. Beards are for bad-asses and should stay that way.

Some other suggestions were eminently sensible: Soldiers told the *Army Times* they want to put rank back on



the collar, rather than where the symbols go now, just above the stomach: “It's pretty uncomfortable having to look at a female soldier's chest to see her rank,” one gallant young man said.

Others weren't just sensible, but savvy: For their suit-and-tie uniform, soldiers continue to call for the return of the Army's WWII-vintage “pinks and greens.” “It's classy as hell,” said one soldier, and “has a solid historical look.” THE SCRAPBOOK agrees. Better to look like Clark Gable than a Basque bus-driver. ♦

## Spin, Span, Spun

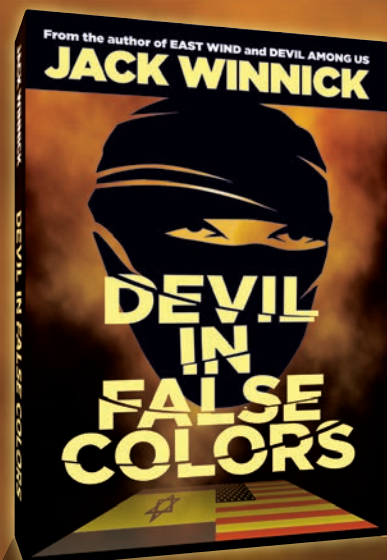
Washington Post “media columnist” Margaret Sullivan has lately discovered that when political

types respond to media inquiries, they “answer” only those questions they choose to answer and smother the rest with verbiage. Being rather new to the capital city, she seems to believe this is a uniquely Trumpian phenomenon, rather than the way Washington works.

THE SCRAPBOOK is thinking, in this instance, of a recent, especially apoplectic, column where she advises television chat show producers *not* to invite Trump partisans or White House staffers to give their side of the argument. Why? Because they're “proven liars,” says Margaret Sullivan. On some recent Sunday morning shows, for example, Stephen Miller “repeated, forcefully and with great conviction, evidence-free claims that



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there is widespread voter fraud” in America. Or take Kellyanne Conway, who, when “grilled” by Matt Lauer on the *Today* show, “slipped and slid through important questions,” leaving viewers “with no answers, except the increasing conviction that the Trump spokespeople are not to be believed.”

Spokespeople not to be believed? Perish the thought!

But if that’s what viewers took away, how is it that the Sunday shows failed? If the Trump “spokespeople”



*Who wouldn't believe this woman?*

come across as clumsy, cretinous, and transparently dishonest, doesn’t that make for great and revealing television? It is a testament to Sullivan’s blinkered hatred for Trump that the media columnist has renounced her faith in simple journalism.

At least we can marvel at the delightful innocence Sullivan displays about the business she ostensibly covers. For what talking-head TV show, if its bookers demanded absolute fealty to the truth, would ever find a politician who could fill the time between commercials (which are the comparatively honest part of the enterprise)? ♦

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# Writing on Deadline

I like to think of myself as a writer-editor on call. If a metaphor needs rewiring or a talking-point has lost its pointiness, I am on it like butter on toast. But when a friend asked me to write an obituary for her mother, I wondered if I was really the man for the job. I didn't know her mother and I had never written an obituary before. But how could I say no?

Inside of a year, I found myself writing two more obituaries, one for a colleague who passed away, all too soon, in the middle of a business trip, and one for the father of the same friend whose mother had just died. These were all sad occasions, obviously, and I was glad to be of help in this modest way.

To my surprise, I took away from the experience much more than I gave.

Not least among the wonders of obituary-writing is the simple act of writing down the basic dates and facts of the life you're describing: birth, education, marital status, family, jobs, retirement, or some combination thereof. Each time, without fail, this information, which we slot so thoughtlessly into the usual bureaucratic forms, began to swell before my eyes, reassuming its true significance and striking a mystic chord.

For the writer, this is very humbling, because you have done, really, nothing to make it happen. But there it is: a true story emerging almost effortlessly, with a beginning, middle, and end already supplied. If you have the facts in front of you, the right themes just seem to surface without your having to impose them. You're not even a writer. You're a secretary taking dictation.

But as you do your work, you

thrill to the odd bits of experience that have become a part of the life and personal lore. My colleague Bill was a preppy, floppy-haired scholar-poet with a weakness for bowties and petite European sports cars. Postponing grad school in rhetoric, he apprenticed himself as a mechanic to work on Alfa Romeos. It was not how he left his mark on the world, but talking to his friends and colleagues, I noticed that few stories so quickly brought a smile to their lips.



John McIntyre, the distinguished copy editor of the *Baltimore Sun*, recently said that if you can write one obituary you can write a hundred of them, so stable is the formula. Perhaps he is right that any life can be described according to such conventions, but there is no reason mourners and obituarists can't vary the formula by putting a greater emphasis on their favorite anecdotes. In fact, I think they should.

One story I heard about my friend's mother concerned the time she first met her husband of 49 years. Because she wasn't wearing her

glasses that day, she had to ask her friends if he was at all good looking. Apparently, he was, so she agreed to a date. Still not sure of what she was getting into, she took a kitchen knife with her to the date, carrying it in her pocketbook.

Okay, this little gem about the knife didn't make it into the official obituary. Then again, this woman left behind a number of excellent stories that more than covered the allotted 400 words. As a young woman, inspired by Amelia Earhart, she took flying lessons. Although very poor, she found a way to put herself through college and, after graduation, finagled a plane ticket to Europe for a backpack tour. After a successful scientific career, she retired and became a regular at the local library, where she was known as the Puzzle Lady, for her love of assembling jigsaw puzzles and her willingness to help anyone who wanted to work on one.

Her husband, too, left behind some great stories. My favorite, though, was a simple little thing about his playing golf the week he died. He had learned the game as a young caddy and maintained a passion for the sport his whole life. But the kicker was this: Just a few days before he died, he played with his much, much younger son-in-law, beating this poor fellow one last time by several strokes.

In old age, the cliché goes, no one wishes they had spent more time at the office. Still, it is interesting how many of the things we worked hardest at become a blur, while our quirks can actually achieve some measure of immortality, especially among those closest to us. All the better then, I say, if our obituaries document more of the funny details. For the record, I hereby authorize my survivors to do exactly that.

DAVID SKINNER

# The Flynn Affair

Michael Flynn's resignation as President Donald Trump's first national security adviser won't end the controversy surrounding the new administration's purported ties to Russia. Depending on which sources you consult, Flynn was either one of Vladimir Putin's stooges or a martyr to the "swamp"—the permanent bureaucracy in Washington. The truth is undoubtedly more complicated. And it's crucial that we get closer to it.

Flynn had a target painted on his back long before he ever joined Trump's White House. As head of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the Pentagon's main intelligence shop, he often clashed with colleagues and the rest of the sprawling intelligence bureaucracy. He was forced to resign from this post in 2014. But Flynn wasn't an incompetent intelligence officer, as some detractors have claimed. He often got the big issues right.

In 2010, when he was deputy chief of intelligence for NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, Flynn coauthored a scathing report that concluded "the U.S. intelligence community is only marginally relevant to the overall strategy" in that war-torn country. That was correct—it is obvious from many independent sources that the quality of intelligence on Afghanistan has been abysmal.

In 2012, by then heading the DIA, Flynn argued against the intelligence community's consensus that al Qaeda was all but dead. He helped block a draft National Intelligence Estimate that claimed al Qaeda no longer posed a threat to the U.S. homeland. He was correct on that count as well. Al Qaeda wasn't nearly the spent force the Obama administration claimed. Al Qaeda's network has, in fact, substantially grown. The U.S. military bombed al Qaeda terrorists, citing their threat to the West, right up until President Obama's last hours in office and has continued to do so in the weeks since.

Flynn also fought to have Osama bin Laden's massive cache of documents and files fully exploited. The Obama administration wanted America's spies to stop combing through them, well before the analysis was completed. But Flynn and a handful of others worked to make sure that the intelligence was gone through thoroughly.

We've reported extensively on these intelligence battles at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, especially the story of what happened to the trove of information collected in bin Laden's Abbottabad safe house. When it comes to the scope of the jihadist threat, Flynn was right. The Obama administration and the intelligence community leaders who supported the president's ideological agenda were wrong.

But that doesn't excuse Flynn's poor judgment with

respect to Russia. In 2015, he gave a paid speech at an event hosted by Russia Today (RT), the Kremlin's English-language TV network. A picture of Flynn sitting next to Putin at the dinner has gone viral. RT programming is a steady stream of anti-American propaganda, some of it laughably inaccurate. RT, like *Pravda* before it, was created to traffic in fake news. And it was irresponsible for a former senior U.S. official to legitimize it.

Flynn advocated a closer alliance with Moscow in the fight against radical Islamic terrorists. Even if he came by those views honestly, the downsides to his preferred approach are painfully obvious. The Russians have backed Bashar al-Assad's murderous regime in Syria. Russia, Iran, and Assad are fighting Sunni jihadists, including ISIS and al Qaeda, but they are also massacring civilians. Hundreds of thousands of people have been slaughtered by Assad's killing machine. Russia's indiscriminate bombings have only added to the carnage.

Russia has also been advocating on behalf of the Taliban, which remains closely allied with al Qaeda. The Russians claim this alliance is necessary to counter the growth of ISIS in South Asia, but the Taliban-al Qaeda axis remains a far more dangerous threat to the future of Afghanistan. The Taliban-al Qaeda alliance controls dozens of Afghan districts. ISIS, while growing, is still relatively small. In any event, Putin's pro-Taliban position is not an example of anti-terror realpolitik. Instead, U.S. military commanders see it as one more way Russia hopes to undermine NATO, which has been fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan since 2001.

Flynn was forced to resign after descriptions of his pre-inauguration contacts with Russian ambassador Sergey I. Kislyak were leaked to the press. Flynn should've known that any calls would be intercepted, as the representative of a foreign power was on the other end. Scrutiny of Russia has been high after the imbroglio surrounding the hacking of Democratic National Committee emails. Flynn must have known that he was almost certain to be recorded and that there would be transcripts.

We still don't know exactly what Flynn and Kislyak discussed, only that Flynn didn't tell Vice President Mike Pence and others the full truth when later asked about the conversation. Even here, however, there is ambiguity. The *New York Times*, citing "current and former administration officials familiar" with the transcript of a December 29 call between Flynn and Kislyak, reported that the text "was ambiguous enough that Mr. Trump could have justified either firing or retaining Mr. Flynn." That hardly sounds damning.



There are questions beyond Flynn. Paul Manafort, Trump's onetime campaign manager, worked for Ukrainian prime minister Viktor Yanukovich for several years. Manafort denied any direct dealings with the Russians last year, but his work for Yanukovich—one of Putin's puppet politicians until he lost power in 2014—is significant. During his February 16 press conference, Trump praised Manafort and cited his denial of any active Russian ties. Carter Page, who worked his way into Trump's campaign as a foreign policy adviser, has had, in the words of the *Times*, "extensive business links" in Russia. Manafort and Page both left the Trump team before the election. Still, their Russia ties are relevant to the questions swirling around Trump and his team today.

It may be the case that we will never understand the full truth about Trump and Russia. But the more transparency, the better. There are transcripts of the Flynn calls. Flynn

defenders insist that they exonerate him; the leakers and the news outlets that have amplified those reports suggest that they're damning. Release them.

And then go further. Congress should impanel a select committee to investigate Trump's ties to Russia and the steady stream of leaks surrounding them. Or the president himself could appoint a bipartisan committee of respected individuals to look seriously at these issues. We're under no illusions about the ability of such panels to produce definitive conclusions. But neither the president nor the country is well served by mystery and innuendo.

If the so-called "deep state" is seeking to undermine the Trump administration by selective leaking, we ought to know it. If Trump's reflexive defenses of Putin are driven by anything other than misjudgment, we ought to know that, too.

—Stephen F. Hayes & Thomas Joscelyn

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# Imperial Branches

**A**t times, the dispute between the Trump administration and the federal courts over the president's executive order on immigration feels more like a WWE SmackDown than a considered statutory and constitutional dispute. Partisan critics of both branches leave one to imagine a sign over the entrance to Constitution Hall, reading "Tonight's Main Match: 'The Imperial Presidency' versus 'The Imperial Judiciary.'"

Such a dispute should not come as a surprise. Both branches have for some time been advancing their authority and reach, stretching respectively the meaning of executive and judicial power. It also shouldn't come as a surprise since both the judicial and executive powers involve the interpretation and application of the laws—a fact that led John Locke, the political philosopher who first gave us the theory of modern separation of powers, to conflate the judicial power with the executive.

Indeed, if the Federalist Papers' analysis is correct—that maintaining the constitutional order requires one branch's ambitions to check another's—then the occasional spat is to be expected and may sometimes be healthy. The push and pull means that each branch should be relatively clear about what its authorities are and be willing to argue in their defense. For the public, it can be a useful civic reminder that we do live in a constitutional republic.

It would help in this particular instance if the president were not confusing his branch's constitutional and

statutory arguments with inflammatory tweets and school-yard name-calling about the character of the judges involved. But the idea that previous presidents have not had serious, even angry, tangles with the judiciary is nonsense. And not all have followed the orders given in a court decision.

Thomas Jefferson, for example, ignored a circuit court ruling that challenged the president's authority to instruct customs collectors to prevent ships carrying certain cargoes from moving along the coast, instructing customs officials to do as he told them. And, far more significant, Jefferson, frustrated by a federal court system populated with Federalist appointees to the bench, was determined, according to his Senate whip, to use the tool of impeachment "for the purpose of giving" those seats "to men who will fill them better."

Andrew Jackson, the president most often compared with Donald Trump, did not enforce a court decision in a case involving the state of Georgia's arrest and jailing of missionaries to the Cherokee Indians living there. The Supreme Court, under Chief Justice John Marshall, found that Georgia had acted against both the Constitution and the treaties of the United States in arresting the missionaries and ordered them released. It was then that Jackson is reported to have said, "Well, John Marshall has made his decision; now let him enforce it."

Similarly, when Chief Justice Roger B. Taney declared that Abraham Lincoln did not have the constitutional authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus (instead, it was Congress's prerogative) and ordered the release of the arrested Marylander John Merryman, Lincoln refused to let him go and continued to exercise the power unilaterally for another two years.

And while Franklin Delano Roosevelt never acted on his plan to "pack" the Supreme Court by adding additional judges favorable to his New Deal agenda, he was not opposed to defying the Court. In one case, he prepared a radio message to that effect involving the government's



power to drop its gold support for the dollar and, in a second, told his attorney general that he would refuse to comply with a possible writ of habeas corpus involving captured German saboteurs if the Court rejected his decision to create a special military commission to try them under his commander-in-chief authorities.

As Lincoln and other presidents have noted, the president takes a unique oath to “preserve, protect and defend the Constitution,” along with his obligations to “faithfully execute the office of President” and “take care that the law be faithfully executed.” What the Constitution does not say is that a president must preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution as the federal courts interpret it, or as they interpret his powers and duties.

However, it is also true that a theory holding that each branch is the sole and final judge of its own powers raises the problem of an intra-branch struggle without resolution when those powers appear to, or arguably do in fact, overlap. In the case of the president and Congress—say, for example, in a dispute between a president’s decision to withhold information from the legislature by declaring “executive privilege” and Congress’s need for information for oversight and legislation—the two branches have sufficient tools between them to force the matter to a resolution. That’s less clear in the case of a dispute between the judicial branch and the executive, where, as Alexander Hamilton notes in *Federalist 78*, the former “is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power.”

The paradoxical answer is that, although “the weakest” of the branches, the Court and the courts have the greatest sway in the public’s mind as the branch most closely associated with upholding the rule of law. As a result, while there have been those instances noted above, most of the time, presidents are judicious in publicly challenging the courts and typically do so only when they believe it is essential. To

do otherwise is to stir the anti-monarchical sentiment lurking just below the surface of America’s democracy, leaving the chief executive a singular figure appearing to exercise unconstrained power.

But this pragmatic constitutional dance only works to the extent that judges and justices are seen as “judges” and not governmental censors whose decisions appear to be based more on what they think the right policy is than on a correct reading of the law. As a matter of their own discipline, judges have, among other things, insisted on placing limits on who can bring a case before a court (“standing”), left so-called “political questions” to be resolved between the president and Congress, and given considerable deference to a common sense reading of laws passed by Congress.

Yet it is precisely these judicial norms that U.S. District Judge James Robart and the Ninth Circuit appeared effectively to ignore in deciding whether to issue a temporary ban on the Trump administration’s immigration executive order. They mainly asked questions about whether there was any justification for the policy itself and then only secondarily came up with the decision that “the Government has not shown that the Executive Order provides what due process requires, such as notice and a hearing prior to an individual’s ability to travel.”

Being watchful of the new president’s wielding of executive power is a no-brainer. His executive style, his abusive language towards elected and duly appointed officials, and his apparent lack of knowledge of the Constitution itself all point to such a need. But it would be a lot easier if the federal courts were not fueling the fire and giving the president easy targets because of their overreach. Playing “Chicken Little” with the Constitution is a recipe for even more constitutional dysfunction and populist disgust with America’s most important institutions.

—Gary Schmitt

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# A Big Deal?

## Netanyahu comes to Trump's Washington.

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

What a difference an election makes. Benjamin Netanyahu, for eight years scorned and insulted by the Obama administration, found himself warmly embraced in the Trump White House last week. No more name-calling, no more deliberate “daylight” between Israeli and American positions, no more abandonment of Israel at the U.N.

This was the central achievement of the Netanyahu visit: to demonstrate a visible end to the Obama years and put Israeli-American relations back where they were in the George W. Bush administration. The warmth of the White House greeting was no doubt bitter gall to Bibi's many enemies in Jerusalem, and in the Israeli press accounts they carped and complained about this word and that phrase. But having a close and supportive relationship with Washington is always an asset to an Israeli prime minister, and so it will be for Netanyahu.

Beyond this symbolic reset of the U.S.-Israel alliance, the visit was filled with several real developments. The American and Israeli press are mostly focusing on “the abandonment of the two-state solution” and quoting President Trump's lines:

I'm looking at two-state and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one that both parties like. I could live with either one.

I thought for a while the two-state looked like it may be the easier of the two. But honestly, if Bibi and if the Palestinians—if Israel and the Palestinians are happy, I'm happy with the one they like the best.

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The criticism of Trump for this “abandonment” is misplaced. At least since Bill Clinton, a “two-state solution” has been the insistent American goal, but where has it gotten us—or the Israelis and Palestinians? Trump is focusing instead on the goal, which is peace, and saying any road that gets us all there can work for him if it can work for the parties. Criticism of this position is foolish, elevating the means over the end. He has not abandoned the two-state solution; the hand-wringing



*Trump and Netanyahu, February 15*

of the *New York Times* and the elation of some spokesmen for the Israeli right are both overdone. Trump is doing what he often does best: challenging the conventional wisdom and asking if there is a better path to peace.

In fact Trump has a theory of how to get there—the “outside in” approach that starts with the Arab states. The old two-state approach was to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian deal first, believing it would clear the way for the Arab states to improve their relations with Israel. Trump favors a regional approach: leverage Israel's improving relations with Arab states to help win an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

Netanyahu was first to mention this when the two men appeared together:

I believe that the great opportunity for peace comes from a regional approach, from involving our newfound Arab

partners in the pursuit of a broader peace and peace with the Palestinians.

Trump agreed fully:

And we have been discussing that, and it is something that is very different, hasn't been discussed before. And it's actually a much bigger deal, a much more important deal, in a sense. It would take in many, many countries and it would cover a very large territory. So I didn't know you were going to be mentioning that, but that's—now that you did, I think it's a terrific thing and I think we have some pretty good cooperation from people that in the past would never, ever have even thought about doing this.

Trump later added more:

Our new concept that we've been discussing actually for a while is something that allows them to show more flexibility than they have in the past because you have a lot bigger canvas to play with. . . . I can tell you from the standpoint of Bibi and from the standpoint of Israel, I really believe they want to make a deal and they'd like to see the big deal.

No doubt the Israelis would in principle like to see “the big deal,” because it would mean normal diplomatic and economic relations with the Gulf Arab states. Can this work? You won't know until you try, and Trump plans to try.

Perhaps the biggest news from the visit and press conference is that Trump is a “peace processor.” Instead of abandoning efforts at a peace deal as a waste of time, he plans to jump into them—or at least have his administration, led by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, do so. It's possible that something can be achieved here. The older Israeli-Palestinian “inside-out” approach tends to be all-or-nothing, and when it fails, it produces nothing but anger and disappointment. Perhaps the administration can improve Israeli-Arab relations and cooperation even if a final peace deal is elusive.

But optimism should be restrained. Cooperating with Israel is always risky for the Arab states, which is why they do it in secret. It is a potential domestic political problem of great magnitude for them, so why should they risk it? The answer is that it would improve the lot of the Palestinians—but that

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has never been and is not now a compelling objective for most Arab leaders. It's "nice to have" but not worth any real danger. They are most likely to try it if a strong and reliable American president presses them to do so, over and over again.

And that's the rub here. Arab leaders do not yet know if they have a strong and reliable president with whom to work, or whether he is going to make this regional peace deal a major goal that he will pursue over time.

Arriving at the White House, Netanyahu barely missed passing national security adviser Michael Flynn on his way out. Who will handle the Middle East at the NSC under the new national security adviser, and what will that person's views be? Who will be the next assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs? What will be the balance of power among Trump, the new national security adviser, Jim Mattis at Defense, and Rex Tillerson at State? And for the Arabs, the far more critical question: What will be the new administration's real policy toward Iran? One can envision a tough policy on Iran that defends and gratifies the Sunni Gulf states and leads them to cooperate fully on Israeli-Palestinian matters. One can also imagine a policy that they find wanting and that provides little incentive for them to court additional risks. Until they have made a judgment about President Trump and his administration, they will carefully hedge their bets.

At the news conference, Netanyahu had a lot more to say about Iran than Trump did. The latter did say, "I will do more to prevent Iran from ever developing—I mean ever—a nuclear weapon," which may suggest an effort to extend the Iran deal negotiated by the Obama administration. But after that opening line, and despite Netanyahu's repeated mention of Iran, Trump did not utter the word again. This will leave Israel and Arab states wondering where U.S. policy is heading.

The embrace of "peace processing" led Trump to reiterate something his administration had said a couple of times recently: Unrestrained Israeli

settlement expansion is not a good thing. As Trump put it to Netanyahu, "I'd like to see you hold back on settlements for a little bit." He also said, "I think that the Israelis are going to have to show some flexibility, which is hard, it's hard to do. They're going to have to show the fact that they really want to make a deal" and added, "As with any successful negotiation, both sides will have to make compromises. You know that, right?"

This is very vague, but it is enormously helpful to Netanyahu. Trump's election victory was seen by some on Israel's right as opening the gates: Now there could be many new settlements and indeed annexation of parts of the West Bank. Netanyahu, always cautious, has long resisted such proposals, but that would have been much harder for him if Trump embraced such ideas.

Trump did not. He called for compromise, flexibility, and "holding back" on settlement expansion. The meaning of those phrases will be hotly debated in Israel, but they give Netanyahu some cover. We now have an extremely friendly president, he can say; why antagonize him by seeming to take advantage of him or even to defy him with steps that undermine his plans for a regional peace initiative?

The impact of Trump's desire for such an initiative was visible when he responded to a question on moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which he had repeatedly promised during his campaign. Now Trump was all caution:

As far as the embassy moving to Jerusalem, I'd love to see that happen. We're looking at it very, very strongly. We're looking at it with great care—great care, believe me. And we'll see what happens. Okay?

It has been reported that several Arab leaders weighed in with the new administration to suggest that moving the embassy would cause riots. In itself, such violence in Arab capitals would be no great problem for Trump. In the context of a regional peace initiative, however, riots might scare Arab leaders into backing away from Israel just when Trump wants

them moving closer to the Jewish state. Thus the "great care" with which moving the embassy must now be analyzed.

Netanyahu's own comments on peace with the Palestinians were concise. He has two demands:

First, the Palestinians must recognize the Jewish state. They have to stop calling for Israel's destruction. They have to stop educating their people for Israel's destruction.

Second, in any peace agreement, Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River. Because if we don't, we know what will happen—because otherwise we'll get another radical Islamic terrorist state in the Palestinian areas exploding the peace, exploding the Middle East.

On the first demand he got some support from the president, who said,

I think the Palestinians have to get rid of some of that hate that they're taught from a very young age. They're taught tremendous hate. I've seen what they're taught. And you can talk about flexibility there too, but it starts at a very young age and it starts in the schoolroom. And they have to acknowledge Israel—they're going to have to do that.

This focus on the teaching of hate may mean that, at long last, American policy will stop giving the Palestinians a pass on what is usually—and euphemistically—called "incitement." If the Trump administration can get the Palestinian Authority to end the glorification of terrorists and the teaching of hate, it will have truly moved the parties toward peace.

Trump did not comment on the second demand, "security control" of the West Bank, but it may fit within his regional peace plan. After all, given their fear of Hamas and jihadist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda, there is no reason for Arab states to demand eviction of the IDF from the West Bank. Surely the Jordanians have no real desire to look across the Jordan River and see chaos—or worse yet see Hamas troops or jihadists replacing Israeli soldiers.

There is usually an exchange of gifts during official visits to Washington, ranging from artisanry to jewels, but

in the Netanyahu visit the coin of the realm was mutual political support. Trump called Netanyahu a “friend” and said, “Bibi and I have known each other a long time—a smart man, great negotiator.” He also had Netanyahu’s wife Sara, the target of persistent criticism in Israel, rise for recognition: “I also want to thank—Sara, could you please stand up? You’re so lovely and you’ve been so nice to Melania. I appreciate it very much.”

And Netanyahu spoke of “radical Islamic terror,” using the president’s favorite terminology. Moreover, he ended with words that many Israeli columnists immediately derided: “I’ve known the president and I’ve known his family and his team for a long time, and there is no greater supporter of the Jewish people and the Jewish state than President Donald Trump.” This was over the top, but Bibi wasn’t seeking positive press coverage when he uttered those words; he had another target in mind. Those reporters should have focused more on the final comment at the press conference, which was Trump’s response: “Thank you very much. Very nice. I appreciate that very much.”

So the visit achieved its purpose: to put a very public end to the Obama period and its tensions, and to start the two leaders out as real friends and allies. It also demonstrated that the new administration has a plan: the outside-in, regional approach to Israeli-Palestinian peace. A lot was left unsaid in public, starting with how Israel and the United States will actually approach the problem of Iran’s nuclear weapons program. And as noted, the Arabs—who care far more about Iran than they do about the Palestinians—as well as the Israelis are watching the turmoil in Washington with (to use a Trump term) “great care.” Will the administration soon right itself? Will Trump be a strong leader, surrounded by strong and reliable advisers who understand the Middle East? Is the current drama a passing phase or is it just Act One in a longer play? The answers to those questions will largely determine whether Trump can succeed with his ambitious goals for peace in the Middle East. ♦

# Fine-Tuned Chaos

Why not more such as Gorsuch?

BY FRED BARNES

President Trump has been a strategic success and a tactical failure. That’s the genteel way of putting it. The blunt way is that he’s pushed ahead relentlessly on big conservative issues. But more than Democrats or the media, he’s been his own worst enemy, a tactical bull in a china shop.

Trump has a habit of stepping on his own success. He stuffs America’s news hole with tweets, personal attacks on those who cross him, and comments bound to stir the fury of



the press. He seems quite comfortable with this approach, even when it means his legitimate accomplishments are overshadowed.

Then there’s the chaos at the White House. Trump is not only comfortable with that, he seems to like it. He thinks it creates a path to success. Meanwhile, his aides are going crazy. They come to work each day not knowing what they’ll be focusing on. That often depends on what he’s tweeted that morning.

At a marathon press conference on February 16, Trump denied there is chaos. “It’s the exact opposite,” he

said. “This administration is running like a fine-tuned machine.” Giving Trump the benefit of the doubt, this suggests what others see as chaos, he sees as a clever way of doing business in Washington.

Trump has been advised to calm down by Republican leaders, including Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell and former House speaker Newt Gingrich. He’s listened but hasn’t changed his style even slightly. McConnell and Gingrich have expressed their frustration in public. That hasn’t worked either, at least so far.

In an interview last week, McConnell said Trump’s approval rating would be “10 to 15 points higher if he allowed himself to stay on message.” McConnell said he likes “what the president is doing” but “what he’s saying makes everything harder.” Trump’s tweets, comments, jibes, and complaints make it “harder to achieve what you want to achieve.”

Not only that, but McConnell said there’s a theatrical aspect to some of Trump’s comments that cause them to become multi-day stories. When that happens, as it does when Trump responds to criticism, it smothers serious issues.

Part of the problem is the absence of a strong White House chief of staff. Aides insist Trump wants Reince Priebus to be just that. But neither Trump nor his staff appears to know how a real chief of staff would operate. Or if they do, it scares them.

No doubt someone like James Baker, Ronald Reagan’s chief, does. He was tough, demanding, and effective. He ran the White House with an iron hand. He dealt with the press masterfully, always giving reporters a tidbit or more to brag about. Those who defied Baker were punished, and at least one who leaked without permission was

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DAVE MALAN



exiled to an obscure post in Europe.

Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney were strong chiefs for Gerald Ford and managed to get him to do things he didn't want to do. Rahm Emanuel wasn't quite as effective, but he did a good job in running Barack Obama's White House.

Trump wouldn't like the management style of any of those four. It would force him to accept the advice of his top aide. That's what Ford and Reagan did, less so Obama. But it worked in those cases, spectacularly during the Reagan presidency. Reagan was willing to be managed by handlers. He had bigger things to think about than his schedule or political chores.

"Mr. Trump's preferred theory of management . . . is to encourage multiple competing views and a walk-in-anytime Oval Office policy," the *Wall Street Journal* noted last week. "The White House has at least six different power centers, by our conservative count, and they compete for influence, which often means being the last person to speak to the president on an issue."

Rumsfeld created a similar system for Ford, calling it "spokes of the wheel." It worked in Ford's day because Rumsfeld controlled it. Aides had drop-in rights, but Rumsfeld was always looking over their shoulder. He didn't like surprises. He was in charge.

Everyone—not just McConnell and Gingrich—knows the problem with the Trump administration isn't the agenda but the president's untamed style. "It's pretty clear that Trump is not going to be managed by anyone," says Tom DeFrank of *National Journal*, an expert on White House operations after covering presidents since LBJ.

"But Trump has to allow a strong chief of staff to discipline the rest of the staff," DeFrank says. "It's impossible for any White House staff with as many power centers as Trump has allowed to operate"—that is, unless someone besides Trump can pull rank on them.

A month into the Trump presidency, the power centers have split into two camps, the regulars who would fit into any Republican White House and the irregulars who wouldn't. Irregulars Steve Bannon and sidekick Stephen

Miller favor what the *Journal* calls "shock and awe politics." Priebus, economic chief Gary Cohn, and son-in-law Jared Kushner prefer a more conventional approach. Kellyanne Conway is in between.

Trump may yet learn that it's not safe to let his top advisers run around without a leash. That's what Mike Flynn did and we know the result, a full-blown scandal that's far from fading.

As luck would have it, there's an example of a Trump initiative that has been widely praised and rightly so. It was the selection of Neil Gorsuch as Supreme Court nominee.

The process that led to Gorsuch started last March and ended last month. It was tightly managed. Trump wanted a list of potential conservative nominees. McConnell recommended the Federalist Society and its executive vice president Leonard Leo to provide it. Then Leo and White House counsel Donald McGahn ran things. Trump said next to nothing besides promising to choose from the list. The process ended with a dazzling White House announcement.

It was a strategic and tactical success. More like that and Trump could climb out of the ditch he's digging for himself. ♦

## Gnawing Anonymice

This is no way to run a newspaper.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

**O**n September 30, Donald Trump tweeted in his inimitable style, "Anytime you see a story about me or my campaign saying 'sources said,' DO NOT believe it. There are no sources, they are just made up lies!"

More than a few reporters rolled their eyes. Trump himself loves citing anonymous sources when they suit his purposes. He spent years peddling wild rumors about President Obama being born in Kenya, and he's hardly in a position to be giving a lecture on the ethics of accurately relaying information. But four weeks into his presidency, it's becoming clear that perhaps the media need one. Their reliance on anonymous sources to report on Trump has become all-consuming.

It's not without results, however. The resignation of Michael Flynn from his post as national security adviser seems to have been brought on by a stream of anonymous leaks that turned into a torrent. Flynn resigned, according to

Vice President Mike Pence's spokesman Marc Lotter, because the "vice president became aware of incomplete information" Flynn had given about the nature of his contact with a Russian official, presumably whether Flynn had discussed the issue of sanctions with the Russian ambassador in a late-December phone call. Flynn has insisted he "crossed no lines" and said in his resignation letter that he misinformed Pence "inadvertently."

Despite any number of thinly sourced accusations—including that the FBI had "grilled" Flynn about the phone call to Ambassador Sergey Kislyak—no one yet knows what, if anything, Flynn did wrong other than upset Pence. Following his resignation, CNN reported that the FBI was not expected to charge Flynn with anything, and further, that the "FBI says Flynn was cooperative and provided truthful answers."

Beyond Lotter's vague statement to the *Washington Post*, it's remarkable to consider that when Flynn resigned there had yet to be a single named source making a verifiable

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accusation of his doing anything illicit. This has in no way dampened the media frenzy. NBC's Chuck Todd called Flynn's resignation "arguably the biggest presidential scandal involving a foreign government since Iran-contra." Dan Rather, who, in spite of his journalistic disgrace, is building a steady following for his liberal news analysis on Facebook, wrote that "Watergate is the biggest political scandal of my lifetime, until maybe now." Rather's remarks made headlines at the BBC, *Vox*, *Huffington Post*, and many other outlets.

The *New York Times*, for its part, headlined a February 14 report "Trump Campaign Aides Had Repeated Contacts With Russian Intelligence." The story was sourced entirely to "current and former officials" who "spoke on the condition of anonymity because the continuing investigation is classified." And beyond the eyebrow-raising headline, it was thin gruel. Intelligence agencies "sought to learn whether the Trump campaign was colluding with the Russians on the hacking or other efforts to influence the election," reported the *Times*. But "the officials interviewed" by the paper "said that, so far, they had seen no evidence of such cooperation." Further, they "would not disclose many details, including what was discussed on the calls, the identity of the Russian intelligence officials who participated, and how many of Mr. Trump's advisers were talking to the Russians."

The other wrinkle here is that the FBI investigation of Trump aides isn't news. Shortly before the election, on October 31, the *Times* ran a substantively similar story about the existence of an FBI investigation, anonymously sourced and full of caveats. The headline on that story was "Investigating Donald Trump, F.B.I. Sees No Clear Link to Russia." Parsing the minor differences between the two stories, it seems the gulf between radically different headlines can only be explained by the fact that Trump was expected to lose the election when the first story was published.

Since his election, though, there has been a lot of rationalizing by

journalists in defense of lowering professional standards. In a January 20 column, *New York Times* public editor Liz Spayd chastised her paper for being "too timid in its decisions not to publish the material it had" on Trump. "The idea that you only publish once every piece of information is in and fully vetted is a false construct," she wrote. "If you know the FBI is investigating, say, a presidential candidate, using significant resources and with explosive consequences, that should be enough to write."

To say that Spayd, in her earnest desire to go after Trump, was downplaying the dangers of publishing incomplete information is an understatement. "Franklin Foer of *Slate* and David Corn of *Mother Jones* each took a turn at such pre-election articles [handling sensitive and damaging information on Trump]," she added. "Their stories may not have been precisely what *The Times* would have done, but they offered a model."

That they did. In fact, the stories by Foer and Corn are demonstrably models of what not to do. Foer's story was published October 31, the same day as the *New York Times* item on the Trump FBI investigation. Foer reported that a computer server registered to the Trump Organization had been set up to facilitate suspicious communications with a Russian bank. Hillary Clinton tweeted out a link to Foer's story, and her campaign publicized it. It was quickly, and somewhat embarrassingly for Foer and *Slate*, debunked by technical experts. As the *Washington Post* put it, "That secret Trump-Russia email server link is likely neither secret nor a Trump-Russia link."

The Corn story, also published October 31, was about the now-infamous oppo dossier on Trump, that among other things, alleged Trump had dealings with Russian prostitutes. Corn's story was largely ignored at the time. It wasn't until CNN followed up in January that the dossier story blew up—in both senses of the term.

Details in the dossier that could be easily verified turned out to be false, such as the accusation that a Trump lawyer had met with a Russian official

in Prague. It's now widely believed that CNN jumped the gun and failed to confirm key details because they were too trusting of the high-ranking Obama intelligence officials who vouched for the story. Naturally, those officials remain anonymous.

And yet, with their reporting last week on Flynn, the *Times* does appear to have now fallen in line with Spayd's suggestion that the idea you fully vet stories before publishing is a "false construct." This is obviously a questionable and risky reporting strategy, and one that opens up the media to manipulation by their sources, especially those in the intelligence community.

Flynn gave a defiant interview to Richard Pollock at the *Daily Caller* on his way out of the White House. He made a point that, regardless of the ultimate facts of his own case, is hard to ignore. Referring to the reporting on his phone calls, he said, "In some of these cases, you're talking about stuff that's taken off of a classified system and given to a reporter. That's a crime," Flynn said. "You call them leaks. It's a criminal act."

It used to be a specialty of the liberal media to raise the alarm about the shadowy security state undermining democratic governance. The *New York Times* won a Pulitzer in 2006 for warning about the post-9/11 expansion of America's surveillance programs. Now it seems as if the paper is gunning for a Pulitzer by exploiting the same leaks it once warned about.

Flynn is just the most prominent and recent example of this media phenomenon. Anonymous sources have dominated media coverage of the Trump presidency, on topics ranging from the president's private conversations with the president of Mexico to the White House reaction to *Saturday Night Live* sketches. It's been the defining characteristic of Trump coverage so far. Some of this is par for the course for any new administration. But with Trump, the anonymity dial has been turned up to 11. And this for an administration doing plenty of radical or questionable things in plain sight that can be reported on with pungent on-the-record interviews.



The media may protest that the Trump presidency is uniquely threatening and dishonest, and thus merits uniquely aggressive coverage, outside of the usual journalistic norms. But in so doing, they may paradoxically help him. Trump already won an election campaign in which his ostentatious denunciations of the dishonest media were a prominent theme. And in the wake of Flynn's departure, Trump is once again ramping up the rhetoric on leakers and the media.

On February 15, the morning after the *New York Times's* "Repeated Contacts With Russian Intelligence" headline,

Trump tweeted: "The fake news media is going crazy with their conspiracy theories and blind hatred" and "Information is being illegally given to the failing @nytimes & @washingtonpost by the intelligence community (NSA and FBI?). Just like Russia." Later that day it was reported that a Trump ally, billionaire Stephen A. Feinberg, is being tapped by the White House to head up a comprehensive review of the country's intelligence agencies.

Anonymous sources may have won the battle over Flynn, but it's far from clear they're going to win a war on the Trump administration. ♦

# Nullifying Calhoun

Yale stumbles into the right decision.

BY JAY COST

Yale University last week announced that it will rechristen Calhoun College, named after alumnus John C. Calhoun (class of 1804), the famous and powerful statesman from the antebellum period. Yale president Peter Salovey stated, "The decision to change a college's name is not one we take lightly, but John C. Calhoun's legacy as a white supremacist and a national leader who passionately promoted slavery as a 'positive good' fundamentally conflicts with Yale's mission and values."

This decision was greeted with a measure of criticism. Fox News's Geraldo Rivera resigned as a fellow of the residential college because "intolerant insistence on political correctness is lame." Roger Kimball of the *New Criterion* took to the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* to blast the muddled logic behind the decision. After all, Kimball noted, Elihu Yale—the namesake of the university—was himself engaged in the slave trade.

Kimball's point is well taken,

especially in regard to the phrase "white supremacist," a neologism that does a poor job of situating Calhoun in his own time. Conservatives are right to worry about the progressive assault on the icons of American history, particularly when men of the past are condemned and denounced not according to the standards of their day but ours.

But Calhoun is unusual among progressive targets in that he falls short by the standards of his own day, although Yale failed to explain this coherently. Their failure, however, does not change the facts of the case. When push came to shove, Calhoun chose the parochial interests of South Carolina over the welfare of the Union, and in so doing laid the intellectual groundwork for the violence of the Civil War.

Calhoun began his career an ardent nationalist. Elected to the House from South Carolina in 1810, he joined the "War Hawks" in pushing for conflict with England. After the War of 1812, he became a leader in the Madisonian wing of the Republican party. He was an architect of the Second Bank of the United States, and even voted for the Tariff of 1816. Most

congressmen from his region opposed the measure, but he believed a moderate course of protection would improve the nation's defensive capabilities. He served for eight years as secretary of war under James Monroe, then two terms as vice president, under John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson.

Calhoun's views began to shift during the 1820s. He had once hoped that economic and population growth would be more balanced between the regions, but he became alarmed that the North had outpaced the South—and was looking to press its advantages through legislation. The break came with the Tariff of 1828, remembered as the Tariff of Abominations. This tariff hardly answered the call of sensible economic development. It was instead a naked grab for economic and political advantage, which more or less robbed the South to enrich the North and the West.

Southern members of Congress were near unanimous in their opposition, but Calhoun took matters further than ordinary politics. He saw in that law a fatal defect in American government—the possibility for an avaricious majority to line its pockets at the expense of a minority. Writing in *Federalist* 10, James Madison had argued that this was less likely to happen in a republic as extensive as the United States, but Calhoun rejected this idea. The tariff showed that it was only a matter of time until factions would form a majority to gang up on a minority—in this case, the North and West teaming up against the South.

Calhoun was a prolific writer blessed with a keen mind, but he was inclined to follow his arguments to their most extreme conclusions. Hence, in the *South Carolina Exposition*, written in 1828, he developed the idea of the "concurrent majority." He argued that states retain full sovereignty over internal matters, that the national government was authorized to legislate only in cases where the good of all required it, and that the states possessed an implicit veto over federal laws that violated this limitation. The *Exposition* helped inspire the Nullification Crisis of 1832-33, when

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South Carolina declared the Tariff of 1828 to be null and void within its borders.

A compromise was hammered out between Calhoun and Henry Clay to reform the tariff, which should have vindicated Madison's confidence that a large republic would protect minority rights. But Calhoun was undeterred. He expanded the ideas in the *Exposition* into the *Disquisition on Government*, a sectionalist magnum opus from the man who once represented the best of Southern nationalism. In his final act as statesman, during the winter of 1850, Calhoun opposed admitting California as a free state, even with the conditions that Clay had fashioned in what would become the Compromise of 1850. Too old and ill to speak, he delegated the task of delivering his final address to Senator James Mason of Virginia. Calhoun's conclusion: There could be no compromise. The North had to stand down on the matter of slavery and provide the South with a constitutional guarantee of sectional balance in the government. Otherwise,

disunion was inevitable, and proper.

Calhoun's was no doubt a formidable life. One cannot understand our nation's history without knowing at least a little about him. But this is not a life that any American should feel obliged to honor. And that is not because he was a slaveholder who defended the institution of slavery. Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and George Washington all fit in that mold. Rather, it is the *lengths* to which Calhoun was willing to go in defense of his section's interests.

Though Calhoun did not recognize it as such, the concurrent majority was a dangerous, *violent* doctrine. No doubt he was right that the Tariff of Abominations was a terrible piece of legislation, and he was also correct that it raised the specter of majoritarian tyranny. But the concurrent majority implicitly validates a tyranny of the minority. In his thinking, each state was the proper judge of when the federal government is violating its proper limits. So what happens when a state is selfish or immoral in defying the rightful acts of

a legitimate majority? Calhoun has no practical answer. But history offers it: The Nullification Crisis nearly turned violent, and the Civil War most certainly did.

Calhoun's concurrent majority is deeply antithetical to the principles embedded in the Constitution. Madison, Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and most of the Founders had agitated for a new governing instrument in part because the states had once claimed the authority Calhoun now argued had remained implicitly reserved to them all along. The Framers understood that this was unsustainable. If the states were left to judge matters for themselves, the result would be, as Hamilton argues in *Federalist* 8, "desultory and predatory" war.

Even if Yale's logic behind removing Calhoun's name is a total hash, the historical record provides a sound basis for their decision. Calhoun was a prominent statesman, but he misunderstood the Constitution and in so doing undermined the Union. ♦

## Why Waste Our Energy?

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**  
PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

America's extraordinary supply of natural resources gives us an economic and strategic advantage that few other nations have. For years, however, overregulation and political posturing have prevented us from leveraging these resources to reach our full energy potential. That's finally changing.

Since assuming office, President Trump has taken important steps toward capitalizing on America's energy opportunities, including signing an executive order to accelerate the review of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines. These critical infrastructure projects will create tens of thousands of American jobs, support affordable energy for businesses and families, and generate significant economic growth. Since the order was signed, the Dakota Access pipeline was granted final approval and resumed construction after many months of unnecessary delay.

For other current and future energy infrastructure plans, the president also took much-needed action to streamline permitting and expedite environmental reviews. In the past, numerous other pipeline construction projects got trapped in a web of bureaucratic procedures and reviews, many of which take years to complete. The projects are also attacked with costly and frivolous lawsuits from opponents of energy development. This is unacceptable. We need thorough, but timely, decisions on these projects, which are capital intensive for the companies that spearhead them and crucial to the workers and consumers who benefit from their construction.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also realizes the importance of energy infrastructure. In their meeting last week, President Trump and Prime Minister Trudeau agreed on the need to cooperate on important pipeline development projects. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce applauds their shared commitment to job creation and energy development.

President Trump's actions and executive orders regarding energy are welcome progress, but more remains to be done. The Chamber will push our leaders to continue prioritizing energy reforms and reverse Obama-era regulations designed to keep our energy in the ground. Our Institute for 21st Century Energy is working with Congress and administration officials to identify opportunities to responsibly develop more of our country's resources, build energy infrastructure to move it around, and usher in the next generation of energy innovations.

It was Prime Minister Trudeau who said, "There isn't a country in the world that would find billions of barrels of oil and leave it in the ground while there is a market for it." Fortunately, our new leaders seem to agree. Our nation is equipped with vast resources—and it's high time we put them to work on behalf of our businesses, our workers, and our economy.



Learn more at  
[uschamber.com/abovethefold](https://uschamber.com/abovethefold).

# Techie Largesse

## Why so few donors for critical gender studies?

BY NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

Higher education had a very good year. That's the news from the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, which reports that "during an election year soaked in populism, some of America's biggest philanthropists bestowed an unusually large chunk of their charity on colleges and universities, including several elite institutions." How large? Colleges and universities received almost half of the \$5.6 billion given away by the top 50 donors in 2016, a larger share by far than in any of the past five years.

Is this, as the *Chronicle* implies, a message sent by America's wealthy to show their support of elite academia in the face of a populist uprising? Not really. Rather, if America's most successful businesspeople are making a vote of confidence, it is not in academia in general, but in scientific research—and medical research in particular.

Phil Knight, the cofounder of Nike, has said that declining public support for scientific research is what has led him and his wife to pledge half a billion dollars to the University of Oregon. They were at the top of the *Philanthropy* 50 list this year. The Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact is "designed to fast-track scientific discoveries and the process of turning those discoveries into innovations that improve the quality of life for people in Oregon, the nation and beyond."

The Knights are hardly alone. Michael Bloomberg has given hundreds of millions to the Bloomberg American Health Initiative at Johns Hopkins University; Howard and

Lottie Marcus left \$400 million to the American Associates of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, which promotes research in desert ecologies.

Many of the biggest philanthropists have made their money in the world of scientific innovation. So when they "give back," that is what they support. Technology entrepreneur Larry Ellison donated \$200 million to establish the Lawrence J. Ellison Institute for Transformative Medicine at the University of Southern California, dedicated to the prevention and treatment of cancer. It's only natural for those who have made their fortunes in technology to support scientists. For example, Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen has made large grants to Stanford and Tufts to foster bioscience discovery.

Such largesse isn't necessarily an endorsement of the broader university. Philanthropists may see great potential for academic scientific research, but that doesn't translate into support for undergraduate teaching or liberal arts education.

There are reasons it is more attractive to give to scientific research endeavors, reasons beyond just that they are noble and interesting pursuits. For one, money spent on science and technology is more likely to produce measurable results than money spent on improving undergraduate education.

Consider the fate of philanthropists who try to change college curricula to include a more substantive core or more exposure to free-market economics, efforts that have regularly been met with backlash on campus. Who wants to get grief—as Lee Bass famously did with his grant to Yale—trying to figure out whether one's gift to support education in Western civilization is actually being used the way it

was intended? Rare is the donor who is willing to take abuse, as the Koch brothers did in 2014 for giving money to the United Negro College Fund, and then make similar donations directed to historically black colleges, as Charles Koch did this January.

Most donors, even if they believe such efforts are useful, lack the stomach to get mired in university politics and bureaucracy. Giving their money to science-focused research centers, as opposed to a general fund or to non-science faculty appointments, suggests that they know the rest of the university can be a sinkhole of ideology and mediocrity.

The hard-science laboratories and research centers, by contrast, are hotbeds of meritocracy. The cream rises to the top, and though the rest of the faculty and administration would like to drag them into the world of politics and protests, for the most part these researchers remain above the fray. But the faculty and staff of these research labs at universities are no more connected to the educational experience of undergraduates than are most schools' football teams.

Universities are eager to tout the large gifts they receive; it burnishes their brands. Indeed, when young people apply to college, prestige is often a consideration. The easiest way to measure prestige is often by looking at the success of advanced research in the hard sciences. Some college rankings include factors like the number of Nobel Prize winners a particular school employs. But how many of them are teaching Introduction to Chemistry, let alone French Lit 101?

It's not that most universities are starving when it comes to money for scholarships and general operating expenses. Charles Munger, vice chairman of Berkshire Hathaway and number 7 on the *Philanthropy* 50, believes that housing is very important to the student experience, and so has pledged a small fortune to the University of California, Santa Barbara and the University of Michigan for dormitories. Austin Marx is supporting scholarships to the City University of New York, his alma mater.

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Naomi Schaefer Riley, a senior fellow at the Independent Women's Forum, is the author of *The New Trail of Tears: How Washington Is Destroying American Indians*.



But very few donors are interested in supporting race and gender studies or in funding social activism on campus.

Most philanthropists would rather say they helped to fund a cure for cancer. And who can blame them? ♦

# Banlieue Battles

## Paris and the politics of security.

BY DOMINIC GREEN

A this-Mons, a suburb by the Seine in southern Paris, is close to Orly Airport, but a world away from the tourists' City of Light. Last October, at a stoplight in the adjoining *commune* of Viry-Châtillon, 15 youths with Molotov cocktails attacked police cars from Athis-Mons and nearby Savigny-sur-Orge. Four officers were injured, two of them with third-degree burns. One January night in another neighboring *commune*, Juvisy-sur-Orge, a mob of more than 50 youths broke into homes with steel bars and machetes, and vandalized more than 20 cars. The police, who took an hour and a half to arrive, made 11 arrests. Seven were minors from Athis-Mons.

This month, the focus shifted to a housing estate in Aulnay-sous-Bois, a suburb on the other side of Paris, and a case of police brutality that displaced the financial scandals of presidential candidate François Fillon from the front pages. On February 2, four policemen stopped a 22-year-old black youth worker named Théo; they were in the neighborhood responding to reports of drug dealing. The policemen demanded to check Théo's identity, then tipped the contents of his backpack at his feet. Théo, who has no criminal record, broke free, but not, he says, to run. "I knew there were no cameras by my home," he told BFMTV five

days later. "I managed to struggle away, so I'd be left in front of the cameras. I wasn't trying to run away. . . . I put myself against a wall, quietly, and then one of the policemen comes and hits me. I saw him with his truncheon. He thrust it into my buttocks."

Footage shot by witnesses shows Théo on the ground, his body obscured by the officers. He was handcuffed, teargassed, beaten, and arrested. Several hours passed before he saw the duty doctor at the police station. "He told me, this is very serious," Théo said. "There's an opening of at least five or six centimeters, and we have to operate as soon as possible." Transferred to Robert-Ballanger hospital, Théo required surgery for "a longitudinal wound in the anal canal" and injury to "a section of sphincter muscle." A doctor said he had also suffered severe trauma to his skull.

In 2005, the accidental deaths of two youths who had fled from a police check in the suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois led to four weeks of rioting in suburbs across France and President Jacques Chirac declaring a state of emergency. Since Théo's arrest, Aulnay-sous-Bois and its neighboring districts have seen daily marches and nightly riots. Protesters claim that France has "*deux poids, deux mesures*"—"two weights, two measures"—one for whites, another for immigrants and minorities.

The policemen have been suspended. Three are charged with assault, the fourth with rape. The politicians have taken sides, folding the case into

their campaigns for the presidential election just over two months away. On February 7, François Hollande, the outgoing and unpopular Socialist president, visited Théo in the hospital. Hollande appealed for calm and promised "justice." Socialist candidate Benoît Hamon said that public trust in the police "must urgently be restored" and called for exemplary prosecutions. Marine Le Pen announced that the National Front trusted the police completely and devoted the following day to "security" and showing "support for the forces of order."

Le Pen did not show her support at Aulnay-sous-Bois, where the forces of order were contending with vandalism and firebombs, but in the southern suburbs, where there had been no rioting. The main security problem this time was the simultaneous visit of two presidential candidates. While Le Pen visited police headquarters at Juvisy-sur-Orge, Savigny-sur-Orge, and Athis-Mons, center-right candidate François Fillon relaunched his campaign with a visit to Athis-Mons's new Urban Surveillance Center.

The USC, set up in a converted factory in 2016, allows municipal police officers to monitor remote camera feeds from Athis-Mons, Juvisy-sur-Orge, and Viry-Châtillon. On February 8, armed police waited for Fillon in drizzling rain. A crowd of 50 supporters of Left party candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon performed the *symphonie des caseroles* for the TV cameras, banging spoons and lids on cooking pots while chanting aspersions on Fillon's honesty. "Is he a criminal?" a gray-haired woman mused with the rhetorical grace of the French. "Yes. In France, all politicians are criminals."

The protesters charged to the service gate. The police and the news cameras gave chase, interrupting the cigarette break of the USC employee leaning by the building's back door. "What a mess," she said, exhaling. "But then, I'm not political." White, suburban, in her thirties, and disenchanted with the traditional parties, she is the kind of voter that Fillon and Le Pen are chasing. Will she be voting for Fillon?

"You must be kidding."



Théo, post-surgery

Dominic Green, a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, teaches politics at Boston College.

NEWSCOM

Fillon's car ran the gauntlet, and the candidate was hustled inside. We squeezed into a windowless conference room with a long table. On one side of the table, eight senior officers from the municipal police; on the other, empty chairs for Fillon and the local mayors, all supporters of his party, Les Républicains.

"I think he's visiting here because the security situation has changed," said Caroline Barranco, a police brigadier from Viry-Châtillon. She mentioned the disturbances in Aulnay-sous-Bois and the attack on the police cars in her district in October. "They were burned in their cars. That made a vivid impression on the forces of order."

After the Viry-Châtillon assault, municipal police demonstrated for better working conditions and expanded powers of self-defense. "We need more security, more equipment, and more money," Barranco declared. That afternoon at the nearby Juvisy-sur-Orge police station, Le Pen promised to "rearm" the municipal police, both materially and "morally"—including the "presumption of legitimate defense" in cases of police violence against citizens. Fillon renewed his campaign on a promise of law and order—to draw voters from the National Front.

Fillon and the mayors filed in, like a white-collar suspect with a team of lawyers. He wore a dark gray suit, a blue-striped shirt, a natty, knotted wool tie in dark blue. For February, his suntan was several shades richer than appropriate to a public servant campaigning as the candidate of austerity and transparency. He listened as the police described their problems: insufficient budgets, rising crime, poor communication with the Police Nationale and the Gendarmerie, and managing "the politics of security" between the various police agencies and the layers of local government.

Fillon shifted in his seat. He stroked the parting where no hair is out of place. He scratched the fingers of his left hand at the cuticle of his thumb. He dropped his gaze to the table and frowned as though disappearing into his thoughts. Now and then, he looked

warily over the policemen's shoulders, to the journalists and photographers who stood behind them. More than a week had passed since the weekly *Le canard enchaîné* broke the "Penelopegate" story, the news that Fillon put his wife and two of their children on his parliamentary payroll. His support has collapsed.

In mid-January, Fillon was polling as high as 26 percent, just behind Le Pen, in the first round of voting (to take place April 23), and stood to defeat her in the second round (May 7) by a margin of 65 to 35 percent. This week, Fillon is polling only 17.5 percent in the first round. He has ceded second position, and a place in the second round, to the centrist technocrat Emmanuel Macron.

The *parquet national financier*, the national financial prosecutor, has yet to decide whether to send Fillon's case to a magistrate or open a criminal inquiry. Perhaps Fillon was relieved that he was the one asking questions of the police. He interrupted a meandering report from one of the policemen and leaned forward to suggest his incisive grasp of the issues.

"How many dogs do you have?" he asked.

"One."

Everyone laughed. The policemen returned to their litany of problems, from traffic jams to terrorism. The mayors parried with promises of bureaucracy, and then Fillon took the microphone. He held it low and talked quietly, as though every word might be used in evidence against him.

"This place is a symptom, a symbol of insecurity," he said. "The municipal police must maintain the public's trust. The municipal police also need the means of control, and to be able to cooperate with the national police." Like Le Pen, he promised material assistance and money—"vehicles, modern equipment," and, despite campaigning to cut government expenditure, "12 billion euros" for police, justice, and defense. Like Macron, he vowed to apply "technological progress" to policing. Perhaps the technological savings will fund some of his 12 billion euro gift.

Le Pen argued for unconditional

support and arming the municipal police. Fillon will consider "obligatory armament" and offered conditional moral support in the face of "mounting violence." There are, he said, "good historical reasons" for periods in which the public has felt "distant" from the police. "But if the violence continues, a large majority of the French people will support the police. . . . For now, we must carry ourselves with absolute intransigence."

No questions were taken from the press. Fillon hurried out of the room like a fugitive. Later that day, a National Front communications operative tweeted photos of Hollande by Théo's bed and Le Pen at the police station. "One is on the side of the shields of the nation. The other is on the side of the rabble." Fillon has chosen his side on immigration, Islam, and law and order. But can it revive a campaign tainted by allegations of corruption?

The next day, intransigent before calls for his resignation, Fillon delivered a second non-apology to the cameras and the party members. "I have nothing to hide," he insisted. The media were after him because he was "an ideological enemy" of "the system." "I'm not afraid of transparency, and I expect my competitors for the presidency to be as clear as I am. No doubt the press will require information from them. If not, then there really are two weights, two measures."

On Friday, a poll showed that Fillon's obduracy had failed to raise his support. A police source claimed that Théo's trousers had "slipped down on their own." Police arrested an Islamist cell in the southern city of Montpellier. Protests and riots spread from Aulnay-sous-Bois to neighboring suburbs. On Thursday, the state prosecutor decided to keep the Penelopegate case open. With Fillon floundering and Macron a callow insider associated with the failed Hollande, a National Front presidency becomes less unlikely.

"Security forces have been targeted by gangs of scum that nothing seems to be able to stop any more," Le Pen said on Monday, "and certainly not the courts, in an overall context of decadence." ♦

# The Face-Off

## *President Trump's Iran dilemma*

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

**D**onald Trump has promised a foreign policy of muscular retrenchment, in which a better-resourced U.S. military intimidates our enemies without serving as a global cop. More than any president since Richard Nixon, our new commander in chief sees virtue in brutal authoritarians, especially if they are fighting radical Islam. He has passionately belittled the idea of nation-building, freedom agendas, and protracted conflicts in Muslim lands.

Trump's foreign-policy coherence and mettle will soon be put to the test over Iran. What he does about Barack Obama's nuclear agreement and the Islamic Republic's expeditionary zeal, especially its enthusiasm for creating and deploying Shiite militias in sectarian wars, will surely guide what he does throughout the Middle East and likely define the way he deals with Russia. With the exception of how the president approaches the People's Republic of China, no foreign-policy question may have ramifications as momentous. It looks to be Trump's first big, gut-wrenching challenge.

Trump has described the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and his predecessor's approach to the clerical regime as weak-kneed and calamitous. Republicans in Congress are similarly moved: They are preparing new sanctions to punish Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards for their savagery in Syria, their support for terrorism, and the long-range ballistic-missile program under their control. They will probably garner enough Democratic senators to ensure the legislation makes it to the president's desk. The Islamic Republic's supreme leader Ali Khamenei has repeatedly stated that new sanctions levied by the United States for nonnuclear reasons are violations of the atomic accord. The Europeans, who are eager to increase trade with Iran, are largely in agreement. Not wanting to endorse Tehran's complicity in mass murder in Syria, they could embrace minor sanctions that Khamenei could ignore.

In the run-up to the JCPOA, President Obama and

Secretary of State John Kerry repeatedly told Congress that the nuclear deal wouldn't restrict America's capacity to sanction the clerical regime for its nonnuclear nefarious behavior; in practice, they acted otherwise, giving the green light to European ventures in sectors of the Iranian economy dominated by the Revolutionary Guards. Although Obama could never publicly say so given the guards' bloody history, his entire approach was a combination of good will and bribery. The transformational hopes of the accord, which Obama and his subordinates said were secondary to the technical restrictions on Tehran's nuclear ambitions, really made no sense unless the guards were the primary targets of post-deal largesse. If Obama wanted to test the idea of Iranians "buying into" the international order, then he wanted the corps to grow richer through global commerce. Whether the guards would exploit, for example, the \$17 billion Boeing deal, which Obama cleared at the end of his presidency, to increase their capacity to airlift their forces and allied militias throughout the region was irrelevant given the larger aspiration.

The historical evidence for ideological transformation through enlarged foreign investment is weak: In the 1990s, when Iran's president and clerical major-domo Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Khamenei backed opening the country to European and Asian investment, the corps grew richer, more powerful, but no more latitudinarian in its sentiments. Increasing trade didn't diminish the regime's appetite for terrorism at home or abroad. The explosion of dissent in 1997, which arose behind the candidacy of a little-known, unaccomplished cleric, Mohammad Khatami, surely developed in part from the failed expectations of Rafsanjani's presidency. The supreme leader, Rafsanjani, and his aide-de-camp Hassan Rouhani held firm against political reform.

President Obama seemed to believe that increasing Western trade would at least diminish the odds that the United States would go to war with the Islamic Republic, which was, after all, his primary imperative. Peace through commerce has its advocates on the American right, especially among businessmen. Obama understood Tehran's role in generating Sunni jihadism in Syria and Iraq; does President Trump similarly understand the connection and similarly hope that increasing Western

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commerce with the Islamic Republic can somehow marginalize, transform, or bribe Iranian “hardliners” into giving up their worst ambitions?

Given Trump’s support for an “America First” economy, he may not spend much time considering the potential of politically ameliorative international commerce. Trump has, however, at least once expressed dismay that American sanctions prevent American companies from profiting in the Iranian marketplace. The nuclear deal was so awful in part, Trump suggested, because the Iranians got billions of dollars and others, especially the Europeans, got the business. The White House and National Security Council staff, among whom anti-Iranian sentiments run deep, have been quiet on the Boeing deal. Does the president see ideological forces—Iran’s version of Islamism—as a sufficient threat to override his obvious desire to see American trade expand? It’s possible we will soon see a big contradiction in Trump’s approach to Iran: approval of the Boeing deal combined with new executive-branch and congressionally driven sanctions against the Revolutionary Guards. Whether the president can sustain that contradiction (the Boeing contract in theory opens the floodgates to big-ticket trade) and whether the clerical regime would allow that contradiction to stand remain unclear.

## TRUMPIAN INCONGRUITIES

Is the president willing to risk Obama’s agreement—and the possibility of another Middle Eastern war if he tries to improve it—in a face-off with the clerical regime? The odds are good that when Trump first dismissed the nuclear deal on the campaign trail he did so without thinking through the ramifications. Given Trump’s campaign mantra against wasteful wars in the Middle East, does he see the mullahs’ development of nuclear weapons as a fundamental threat to the United States? Does Trump object to the Islamic Republic’s regional activities, especially in Syria, where Tehran’s actions have been the most aggressive and brutal? Given his support of Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Damascus and Russian president Vladimir Putin’s intervention in Syria, does Trump *really* oppose Iranian aid to Assad? Although

President Obama never said so publicly, his staff certainly suggested that the White House grew to fear a triumph of Sunni Arabs in Syria, among whom jihadists are numerous. United Nations ambassador Samantha Power could wax poetic about Assad’s butchery, but Obama’s Washington no longer viewed the Alawite dictator as a state-sponsor of terrorism against the West.

There is a notable strategic incongruity on much of the American right: anti-Iran but pro-Assad. This shows the enormous advantage that Assad, a thoroughly secularized despot from a heretical Shiite clan, gained when he strengthened the decades-old family alliance with Tehran and framed the rebellion against his tyranny as a battle between secularists and jihadists. Given

Assad’s savage tactics and the collapse of Sunni Syrian society, a bipolar world—secular Alawites, supported by militant Iranian, Arab, and Afghan Shiites, versus Sunni radicals—has emerged. Assad’s stage-managed concern for the Syrian Christian community also hasn’t hurt his appeal in the United States, especially among Republicans.

Syria and Iraq have different internal dynamics, but it’s possible that Pres-

ident Trump could start to see a common denominator: The clerical regime in both countries works against Sunni jihadism. Iran’s role in generating Sunni radicalism—its region-wide policy of encouraging sectarian conflict and creating militias modeled on the Lebanese Hezbollah—is often downplayed in certain quarters of the American right as much as it is on the noninterventionist, nuke-deal-loving American left. Among those on the right and left who view Putin less adversely, fears of stateless Sunnis running amok seem to be much greater than fears of Iranian Shiite imperialism.

For the noninterventionists, there is always one overarching theme: America should no longer be a Middle Eastern power, and Americans don’t really care about the region’s conflicting ideologies so long as Americans aren’t being blown up. The obverse of Americans wanting to distance themselves from the Muslim world and reduce the flow of Muslims coming to the United States is a nonchalance about intra-Muslim politics—about who rules over whom. The post-9/11 understanding that America had paid dearly for its indifference to Muslim tyrannies has, because



*Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps celebrate the launch of a long-range missile.*

of the costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, regressed to an earlier disposition: Secular Muslim despots and kings are the best that can be hoped for given the dysfunction of Islamic cultures. With amped-up counterterrorism procedures in place, the United States need not trouble itself with the social and ideological repercussions of how our “moderate Muslim allies” rule their people. To do so may even be counterproductive. Witness the triumphs of the Palestinian fundamentalist movement Hamas in legislative elections in 2006 and Egyptian fundamentalists in the parliamentary and presidential elections in 2011-2012. Today, it isn’t just the “America First” crowd who are indifferent to Muslim-on-Muslim oppression.

If today Shiites kill Americans far less often than Sunnis, then perhaps that’s as deep as one needs to go. And although the Islamic Republic treats its Christian minorities as second-class citizens, and can torture and kill Muslim converts to Christianity, Iranian clerics have been more respectful of Christians than have their Sunni fundamentalist counterparts. “America First” Christian conservatives who think civilizationally—Christians versus Muslims—could become inclined toward seeing the Islamic Republic as an acceptable despotism given its less harsh treatment of their co-religionists. Trump and his close adviser Steve Bannon aren’t among those hard-right, über-Christian conservatives, like Patrick Buchanan, who supported the nuclear deal and became nonbelligerent toward the clerical regime. The anti-Iranian sentiments of Lt. General Michael Flynn’s men who still serve on the NSC seem unshakeable. That is also probably true of Secretary of Defense James Mattis’s. American soldiers who have had to deal with lethal Revolutionary Guard activity against U.S. troops often have an imperishable loathing for Tehran. And Bannon appears to foresee unavoidable big clashes between the United States and Islamist forces, perhaps even a Judgment Day slugfest, where only the strongest is left standing. Although his commentary on Islamic militancy is more passionate than extensive, Bannon doesn’t seem to see Shiite Islamists as less dangerous than Sunni Islamists. If so, Iran likely is at the center of his global struggle. And his depiction of corporate America and Europe—how modern Western business betrays “Judeo-Christian values”—does suggest overseas he’s sympathetic to the

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**The post-9/11 understanding that America had paid dearly for its indifference to Muslim tyrannies has, because of the costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, regressed to an earlier disposition: Secular Muslim despots and kings are the best that can be hoped for given the dysfunction of Islamic cultures.**

Leninist line about capitalists and the hangman’s rope, except today Western businessmen investing in anti-Western Muslim regimes would be the fools. Obviously, Trump’s worldview is far less developed than Bannon’s. The president’s aversion to the Islamic Republic doesn’t appear as personal or as strategically anchored.

The active-duty and ex-military men in the White House, Mattis, perhaps even Bannon may understand that the secular Arab-state Middle East is dying and that Shiite and Sunni Islamists are the only ones creatively and aggressively imagining the future. They may understand that if the United States continues its downsizing in the

Muslim world, the clerical regime will turn its attention toward the Arabian peninsula, where the largest number of Arab Shiites are oppressed by the Sunni monarchs of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Only the Islamic Republic among Muslim states has successfully created transnational, religiously centered militias it can deploy throughout the region. Armed violence among Shiites in Bahrain is rising. All Shiites can find some passionate common ground in how much they loathe the Shiite-hating Wahhabis and the Gulf princes who indulge them. The downfall of the Saudi royal family would be the ultimate prize. Shiite dominion over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, not seen since a

Fatimid caliph ruled from Cairo (973-1171), is a dream, but not an unthinkable one if the Saudi family cracks and the Shiites of Arabia combine with Iran’s alliance. No one in the region believes the Saudi armed forces, though stocked with the most modern Western weapons, is a tiger. No Sunni state has an expeditionary capacity, let alone the will, to take on the battle-tested Iranians and their allies. Only the United States’ military power—the perception in the Middle East that Washington will use its armed forces to check Iranian adventurism—keeps the southern Middle East from becoming unhinged.

This reading of the region may be too much for the White House since it demands the return of an American cop that candidate Trump derided. The Iranians already tested the administration with a ballistic-missile launch. In response Flynn put the mullahs “on notice” and hit them with new administrative sanctions. These minor actions won’t be enough; Bannon and Mattis probably know far more will be required.

The clerical regime has always feared a rampant

United States, but Washington has rarely punished the Islamic Republic, even when it has taken American life. Tehran will surely push Trump to see if he is fearful of losing the nuclear agreement and American soldiers. To be taken seriously in Tehran, which is ruled by hardball politics, the president will have to do what so many in the Washington foreign-policy establishment fear—escalate.

## IRANIAN & RUSSIAN REPERCUSSIONS

**T**he mullahs are in a quandary about Trump. As the supreme leader recently highlighted, Trump's scathing assessment of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is welcomed. So, too, his alignment with Assad and Putin. So, too, his promise to scale down radically America's post-WWII commitments in the Middle East and his distaste for championing democracy in Muslim lands.

But Trump's ferocious criticism of the nuclear accord and his anti-Iranian appointments—Flynn, Mattis, and former congressman Michael Pompeo to the Central Intelligence Agency, which the Iranian regime still sees as always conspiring against it—signal trouble. So does the proximity of Jared Kushner, the president's Orthodox Jewish, Israel-fond son-in-law. It's impossible to overstate the eminence of anti-Iranian Jewish conspiracies among the Islamic Republic's ruling elite.

President Obama's predictability, his repeated willingness to ignore Iranian imperialism and make substantial compromises—far more than our European allies imagined when the nuclear negotiations began—is unquestionably over with Trump. Iranian fear of the U.S. Navy, which has been a constant since the revolution, has likely ticked up since the election despite Trump's anti-interventionist rhetoric. The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, the former foreign minister Ali Akbar Salehi, who has always enjoyed direct access to the supreme leader, recently gave a long interview about Trump and the JCPOA. The Islamic Republic should maintain the nuclear deal, Salehi advised, and not give Trump an easy victory. The American president will have a much harder time than Hillary Clinton would have had rallying a "global consensus" against Iran, the MIT-educated nuclear engineer surmised. Salehi wants Khamenei to answer Trump's actions with actions that "embarrass the other side, not those that

embolden him." He wants the regime to "asymmetrically" respond to Washington. Salehi, who has excellent English and regularly incorporates American terms and Anglicisms into his Persian, probably understands that the use of "asymmetrical" (*namutaqarin*) unavoidably suggests that Tehran should, among other things, make the United States bleed through the use of Arab Shiite proxies.

Although Salehi doesn't dwell on the now-suspended visa ban against Iranians, the action surely surprised, probably shocked, him and his superiors. Iranians hate to be lumped with Arabs. Many in the regime loathe Iranians who flee to the West, especially the United States; but many of the most senior officials, even within the top echelons of the clerical elite, have family members in the United States. Children of VIPs frequently study in the West—the most prestigious locales are in America. The Islamic Republic has always had considerable cognitive dissonance about the United States, which is most personally played out with children of the elite, both dissident and regime-loyal, making pilgrimage to the mullahs' *bête noire*.



*Iranian clerics during the annual meeting of the Assembly of Experts in Tehran*

Since the Iranian regime knows it has not used U.S. tourist, student, or immigrant visas or refugees for terrorist operations inside the United States, and it knows how Iranian immigrants and their children have seamlessly integrated into America, it probably assumes that something else unpleasant is afoot with Iran's inclusion in the "Muslim-banning" executive order. Not knowing what that is, but fearing the worst, the clerical regime will wait to see if Trump falls in line where Obama left off (supporting the nuclear and Boeing deals).

As it's now pretty clear that the president will keep the nuclear agreement, Tehran will closely watch the aircraft sale and whether the White House designates the Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization. The mullahs will keep a keen eye on the Persian Gulf. They may well stop the guards' speedboats from challenging U.S. naval vessels. Whether Trump and his advisers have any intention of exploiting this growing Iranian anxiety is unclear. Could Trump, who has so openly mocked the idea of regime change as a legitimate foreign-policy objective in the Middle East, actually support the approach, however renamed, for the Islamic Republic? Could he even panic Tehran by faking it?

And Trump's oft-stated admiration for Putin could



complicate, conceivably paralyze, the White House's Iran policy. Under Putin, Moscow and Tehran have developed ever-closer military ties; freed from Western sanctions, Tehran is set to become the largest single client for Russian military hardware. Moscow finally delivered to Tehran S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, which have probably neutralized any Israeli threat to the clerical regime's nuclear sites. The Russia-Iran axis has become militarily dominant in the northern Middle East. Putin likely views it as critical to his overall plan to reassert Russian power. At minimal cost to his treasury, he has made his country the go-to foreign power north of the Persian Gulf. Putin's partnership with Tehran has already gained him unexpected attention (Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli generals have become frequent visitors to Moscow) and leverage (Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan, once determined to see Assad fall, is now saying that he can stay). Syria has paid big, perhaps decisive, dividends to Putin in Europe, which is reeling from the refugee waves that Putin's bombing campaign in Syria has in part driven. The Russian military investment in Syria after the decisive victory in Aleppo appears to be growing substantially.

If Trump is serious about countering Iran regionally or somehow plugging the holes in the nuclear accord (eliminating the development of advanced centrifuges, the sunset clauses that allow for an industrial-scale uranium enrichment program in 14 years, and Tehran's intercontinental ballistic-missile program), he could quickly find himself at a breaking point with Putin. The White House may have hopes that it can somehow separate Putin from Iran, but the odds of that happening appear poor given the strategic advantages Moscow gains from its alliance and the clerical regime's equanimity about post-Soviet Russia.

Since the Islamic revolution, Iran has never posed a strategic threat to Russia. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, President Rafsanjani attempted to increase Iranian influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus through trade and missionary activity. Iranian trade grew and Tehran briefly had a serious presence in Tajikistan, the only Persian-speaking country in the former Soviet Union, but Iran's penetration remained limited. Its religious ambitions failed, thwarted by the Sunni-Shiite divide (the vast majority of Central Asian Muslims are Sunni), Iranian cultural arrogance, and the superior efforts of Turkish Gülenists, Saudis, and other Sunni missionaries (Saudi-subsidized Jordanian and Egyptian preachers affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood weren't hard to find in Central Asia in the 1990s). I have had discussions with Russian military and intelligence officers about the Islamic Republic's religious appeal and covert-action potential in the former

Soviet Union. With the possible exception of Azerbaijan, they thought it was *pshik*—zilch.

Putin has obviously made the calculation that his own brutal actions toward Sunni Muslims in the Caucasus and his support of ferociously anti-Islamist rulers within the former Soviet Union don't have a prohibitive downside. Putin does not now seem to fear Sunni Islamic radicalism within Russia; whatever anti-Russian designs the Islamic State may have, they have so far failed to launch major terrorist operations inside the Russian police state. Putin's alliance with Shiite Iran is a logical extension of this domestic self-confidence; it's also a smart strategic move since Persian power has no effective Arab counterweight. All the Sunni Arabs combined—even imagining such a coalition seems surreal—are weaker than the Islamic Republic. The closer Iran is to Russia, the more Arab states, particularly the oil-rich Gulf states, must treat Russia with greater respect and deference.

And the Iranians may loathe the Treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828), in which Russia sheared off the top of the Persian realm, but the Islamic Republic's revolutionaries have always had a far easier time with Russians than with Americans. There is no love lost: The Iranians know Moscow has often poorly and condescendingly delivered in its commercial, nuclear, and military dealings with Tehran. Yet there is no ideological point of friction between the two. Soviet communism, once seductive among the Iranian and Azeri-Iranian elites, is no more. The clerical regime—especially the Revolutionary Guard Corps—sees Putin's Russia as anti-American. Salehi, ever the clever boy, highlights the growing tension between Trump's pro-Putin sentiments and his maintenance of sanctions against Russia. The forced resignation of Lt. General Flynn, whom the Iranians saw as the most adamant clerical-regime-hater, reinforces this view of American-Russian antagonism. So, too, the flood of press reports about the enmity for the president within the CIA and the FBI because of the closeness of Trump and his people to the Kremlin. Russian propaganda against America's insidious efforts to spread its values in the Russian realm, undermining traditional culture and the mores of the Russian Orthodox church, is remarkably similar to Khamenei's gravamen against the morally corrupting soft-power machinations of the United States. The Iranians have an acute ear for hearing their themes in other people's national narratives and a disposition to forgive others their faults if they can at least get right the anti-American harmony. Putin's decision to bomb to shards the Sunni Syrian opposition in Aleppo has also gained real, if at times grudging, respect from the mulahs and their praetorians.

As President Trump will soon discover, the Islamic

Republic, too, is unlikely to roll over. It's a near certainty that if Trump pushes back against Iran and reimposes crippling financial sanctions, the mullahs will again target through their Shiite militias U.S. soldiers in Iraq, who currently number around 6,000. For the Iranians, America's job in Mesopotamia is almost done since the fall of Mosul isn't far off. American airpower and trainers, who if they were to linger could unhelpfully fortify Iraqi Kurdish, Sunni, and anti-Iran Shiite forces, are no longer needed. Washington could well see an indirect shooting war, which is exactly where George W. Bush found himself. Needless to say, the \$17 billion Boeing deal would collapse.

Anti-Iran sentiments in Congress may even be stronger than in the White House. Legislation is winding its way through that would void the Boeing contract—and by legal extension probably stop the Airbus agreement, too, given the American-made parts that go into every Airbus plane. If the Boeing and Airbus contracts evaporate, it's likely Iranian president Hassan Rouhani's plans to use European investment and technology to revitalize his country's economy will die. If Rouhani's success would produce the worst of all possible worlds, since a better economy would allow the clerical elite to further heal its wounds and divisions after the near-cataclysm of the 2009 Green Movement, Rouhani's political decline ought to be a pre-eminent objective of U.S. Iran policy. Whether Trump so understands Iranian politics is open to question. Given the central role of commerce in the president's worldview and the strong tendency of businessmen to see other businessmen nonideologically, it's possible Trump could incline towards the conventional view: better to support Rouhani the Moderate against the "hardliners." If so, Trump might prefer congressional Republicans to be less comprehensive in the sanctions they put forth.

A betting man now wouldn't place much money on the president going that way, but a certain momentum will develop if Trump decides to keep the nuclear deal and allow the plane contracts. Even in a Trump White House, where Bannon is building a staff to keep the bureaucracies off balance and the establishment on the defensive, the laws of inertia still hold. If Trump becomes committed to this accord, it will take on a life of its own. Punting problems down the road, especially one that could lead to a major conflict, surely still has its appeal, especially for a

man who seems to believe that American wars in the Middle East are stupid.

## A TRUMP-CONGRESS PARTNERSHIP?

The decisive issue will likely be the new congressional sanctions against the Revolutionary Guards and whether the White House is willing to let Treasury, through a presidential terrorist designation of the entire Guard Corps, aggressively go after the guards and VIP Iranians with new administrative sanctions. Under Obama and Bush, the corps wasn't hit often. When Trump took office, the total executive-branch designation count was only 52. The designations made after the last ballistic-missile launch added another 25 minor targets. Treasury and Congress could zap the regime's praetorians quickly with hundreds more, effectively preventing most A-list European or Asian companies from dealing directly with the corps or its proxies. The guards' access to hard currency outside of Iran would become difficult, as well as their sanctions-evading shell-game with false-flag and limited partnerships with foreign firms.

If the president and the Republican Congress reimposed financial sanctions on the Islamic Republic, Trump would have to be prepared to deal with an angry Europe, since such punitive actions would effectively freeze European banks' ability to finance European commerce inside Iran. It's possible to imagine Trump moving against Europeans over Iran more aggressively than either Bush or Obama were prepared to do: The president's heart obviously doesn't go pitter-patter over transatlantic relations. He may relish a collision with the World Trade Organization.

If Trump does care about minimizing the bad blood with Europe, he might hit hard quickly since Western fraternity will certainly suffer less if new legislation and designations strike before tens of billions of dollars of European investment have flowed back to the Islamic Republic. So far, little money has actually exchanged hands precisely because the Europeans were uncertain about postelection Washington. The recent announcement that France's Total will delay its investment in a \$2 billion gas project in South Pars 11, which is part of the largest gas field in the world, until Trump agrees to waive U.S. sanctions, was



*Firm partners: Russia's Vladimir Putin and Iran's Hassan Rouhani ink agreements in Tehran, November 2015.*

a reluctant admission by Europe's most aggressive energy company inside Iran. "So, either the waivers are renewed, and as such, respect the Iran nuclear deal," Total's chief executive Patrick Pouyanné explained, or "we'll not be able to work in Iran."

Trump's more strategically inclined staff may also look down the road and understand that if the Republican Congress and president implement new sanctions and Tehran responds by reconnecting centrifuges or throwing out International Atomic Energy Agency monitors, the French, British, and even the Germans are unlikely to cheer the Iranians on. As much as they may hate and blame Trump for destroying the short-term tranquility of the JCPOA, if the mullahs start enriching again to dangerous levels or excluding the IAEA, reality will return. Fear of American and Israeli military action will snap back. The Europeans, who are paralyzed with fear of America abandoning the defense of the Old World, will, however reluctantly, support the reimposition of sanctions against Tehran. They have no other choice. This is in part why Salehi has counseled that Iran not be the first to abandon the JCPOA.

Ultimately, there is one overriding question: Does President Trump believe that preventive military strikes against the clerical regime's atomic sites would be better than living with Mr. Obama's agreement, with all its flaws and constraints on American action? "Rigorously" enforcing a bad agreement leaves the Middle East with a ticking time bomb and the Islamic Republic with ever more money—unless the White House concurrently hits the mullahs with biting sanctions for their regional behavior. Escalating non-nuclear sanctions by themselves are unlikely, however, to oblige the clerical regime to renegotiate the nuclear accord, stop the development of ballistic missiles, or abandon its new militia-centered imperialism. Khomeini and the guards, who loathe having had to limit temporarily their nuclear aspirations, know that they would lose their religious-revolutionary credibility if they now buckled further to the United States.

To imagine scenarios in which Tehran surrenders to the West, which is what an improved deal and Iranian roll-back entails, is to imagine the guards, Khomeini, and the rest of the clerical elite dividing and the we-must-surrender side triumphing over the revolutionary faithful. This scenario is possible if Tehran thought Washington was prepared militarily to obliterate the nuclear program and the Guard Corps, but it isn't likely given American politics (the United States isn't in a bellicose mood) and the psychology of the Iranian ruling elite (they may well prefer to

go down fighting than go down without a fight). Needless to say, the clerical regime's detection of American hesitancy reinforces the Iranian elite's willingness to resist.

Even if President Trump believes the United States has no business being a Middle Eastern hegemon, does he nonetheless find the Islamic Republic, if completely unchecked by Washington, too potentially dangerous and disruptive to the Persian Gulf and Israel? Trump and Bannon appear sincerely sympathetic to the Jewish state. Is Trump's view of Israel's defense as transactionally defined as his view of America's historic defense of Europe, Japan, and South Korea? His pro-proliferation attitude toward nuclear weapons among our Asian allies might also apply to Israel against the Islamic Republic. Did Trump really mean it when he suggested that South Korea and Japan going nuclear might enhance deterrence against North Korea and China? Does a nuclear-armed Israel for Trump abrogate the need for the United States to intercede to stop the mullahs from developing an atomic-bomb infrastructure, which will happen if President Obama's accord stands? Israel may possess between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons.

With Obama, Republicans were in the enviable position of criticizing the White House's nuclear diplomacy and passivity towards Iranian imperialism without bearing the responsibility of demanding more. By not submitting the nuclear deal as a treaty to the Senate for ratification, Obama missed the opportunity to make Republicans show their hand. Lots of folks on the Hill don't think long-term given the overwhelming immediacy of their politics. Consequences are often dealt with after legislation is passed. Trump and the Republican Congress will be, however, hardpressed to avoid the war-and-peace debate since it's impossible to imagine a plausible policy of renewed sanctions against the clerical regime in which the United States doesn't, as a backup, threaten preventive military strikes. And as the president has often stressed in his business dealings, if one threatens, one must be prepared to follow through.

If Trump decides to accept the nuclear deal and basically ignore the clerical regime's search for dominion in the Middle East, he will take the United States to where Obama was headed—just more quickly. American resistance to Iran's revolution, which has become essentially a Republican project, will probably be over. If Trump chooses to reject his predecessor's policy, however, he will reintroduce American hard power into foreign leaders' calculations. Authoritarians everywhere will take notice. So will our European and Asian allies. The United States will be back in the Middle East in a way Trump surely didn't envision when he was castigating Washington's foreign-policy establishment for its costly wars in Islamic lands. ♦



# The United States of Dogs

*Is there anything we won't do for them?*

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

It was late and it had been a long day and lots of miles. It was a relief to pull up at the little Nebraska motel where I had a reservation. They were, however, expecting only one. I hadn't said anything about the dog.

The woman behind the desk was friendly. Wanted to know if I'd had a nice drive. I said I had, even though that wasn't the word I'd have chosen. She ran the card. I signed. She handed over the key.

"Just one more thing," I said, trying for nonchalance.

"Yes," she said.

"I, er, have a dog. He's small and well—"

"Honey," she said, cutting me off. "He's welcome here. Most dogs are cleaner and behave better than a lot of the humans we get."

That was several years ago. And back then, if you were traveling with a dog, it took some work finding a place where both of you could spend the night. Well, the other day, doing some planning for a long driving trip, I decided to check for pet-friendly lodging along the way. Times clearly have changed.

These days, some big chain motels promote themselves as "pet friendly." That's not all. There are upscale and luxury hotels, right in the heart of the big cities, that aggressively market themselves as places where guests can bring their pets and expect them to be pampered. There is, for instance, a hotel in Manhattan that

invite[s] you to bring your furry, feathery or scaly family member—no matter their size, weight, or breed, all at no

extra charge. If your pet fits through the door, we'll welcome them in. . . . Plus . . . our Directors of Pet Relations are on hand (or paw, as it were) to give you and your buddy a tail-wagging welcome.

The hotel offers "plush pet-bed loaners in your guest room, food, water bowls and mats." Not to mention "courtesy bags for walking your dog," and, of course, the "nightly wine reception—pets are welcome to join the party!"

New York, I thought, is challenging enough without bringing a dog along. Not any dog I have ever owned, anyway, and I have owned a number of them. To my mind, you travel with a dog out of necessity. On that trip to Nebraska, my dog was along for some bird hunting. The dog was a pointer—a "working dog"—so it was a business trip for him. I would not have taken him on one of my business trips to Manhattan, for love or money.

Still, other people do. People take their dogs with them to spas that offer packages for guests and their "special friends." These would qualify as stress relievers, perhaps. And who knew that dogs

needed those? But we think differently about dogs these days. That shows up in many ways and, as usual in America, often goes to excess.

There is, for instance, the business of dog food. There was a time when most dogs were fed table scraps and whatever they could cadge from sympathetic owners. Dogs being the great con artists of the animal kingdom, this was usually enough to get by on. You didn't see a lot of fat dogs back then. And of course a lot of dogs never saw the inside of a house. They slept in the garage, if they were lucky, or just chained to a tree if they were not.

There came a time, though, when dogs infiltrated the



*Rumor, winner of Best in Show at the Westminster Kennel Club in Manhattan, February 15, 2017*

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house, and people began buying them food, first as dry biscuits and then in cans, a development that dates to the 1920s. The stuff was made, most likely, from slaughterhouse sweepings that couldn't be sold for humans to eat. And as the country grew more prosperous, there were advertising appeals to status and pride. Who would deny a pet the best in terms of nutrition?

Well, things have now evolved to the point where there are specialty products such as Relaxin' Rover: Salmon Sushi, which is marketed as a "dog anxiety treatment." The pitch goes like this:

Canine anxiety causes stress on the whole family, but Relaxin' Rover can rescue even the most skittish of scooters. . . . Relaxin' Rover is formulated with a proprietary blend of probiotics and natural calming ingredients that help promote digestion and immune function.

An order includes 30 servings at a price of \$24.99, which is cheap when you consider that the ingredients include "kale, barley grass and flax seed, as well as soothing ingredients such as valerian root, L-tryptophan, chamomile flower and ginger root. . . . With fish and shrimp flavoring, Fido can enjoy his own version of a salmon sushi roll." (*Fido?* Does anyone still name a dog Fido?)

And then there are dog owners for whom no commercial product will do, no matter how "natural" or "organic." So there are cookbooks and gourmet recipes for, among others listed on one website, "Brown Rice and Chicken in a Crockpot," "Scrambled Egggy Spinach and Salmon," and "Yoghurt Treats."

It can be irresistible to mock all this. Particularly if you imagine, say, a refugee from Somalia, plunked down in an upscale supermarket and surveying the aisle given over to "pet nutrition." But we are not dealing strictly with issues of status here. Deep love and affection are part of the mix, too, as well as anxiety, the owner's and the dog's.

If salmon sushi doesn't calm a high-strung dog, there is always therapy. A friend of mine uses an on-call professional. Her dog is a very well-behaved and much-coddled labradoodle, and she can be a bore on the matter of its all-around excellence. But then, talking with her about her dog is better than talking to most people about their kids and how they are doing at school (if not that different).

Anyway, we were going on about her wonderful dog and somehow the business of therapy came up.

"Well, we use a therapist," she said. "And she is just amazing. Absolutely the best."

"And, ah . . . is this a regular thing? I mean, like twice a week or something?"

"No," she said a little stiffly, perhaps resenting the implication that her dog might have issues. "It's not like that. We just call her if there has been a traumatic event of some sort."

"What kind of thing would that be?" I asked, trying not to sound skeptical or, God knows, prosecutorial. In part, because I did not want to be rude and also because of some fellow feeling. I've gone above and beyond for dogs of mine, even if I've never taken one to a therapist.

"Well, when we go out, we hire a sitter but that doesn't always work out. If we're away too long, it can be stressful." When this happened, she went on, they would make a call and a professional would come over to the house to "work with" the dog until those issues were resolved and everything was jake.

I nodded as she told me this and found it more interesting than amusing. Not simply because this sort of thing is too easy to sneer at, but also because you run into so much of it. Sooner or later, the person doing the talking will be either someone you respect or, well, *you*.

This thought occurred to me shortly after the fifth or sixth conversation, over a very short period of time, in which people I know, or am related to, revealed them-

selves to be at least slightly stupid about their dogs. I emphatically include myself in that grouping.

I heard about people

- turning down a really desirable and career-enhancing overseas assignment, because it would mean being separated, perhaps permanently, from a pair of faithful Labs;

- leaving a Cardigan corgi at a "doggy day care" where the dog is followed on a webcam so you can check in all day to see how the dog is doing.

- throwing an elaborate (and expensive) birthday party for a dog and inviting its playgroup friends, all of whom brought presents.

- taking a dog to a celebrated university veterinary school for emergency surgery that wound up costing more than \$5,000. During the operation and recovery, the owners stayed in a motel where units had been set aside for people in their situation. They were there for several days.

The couple who owned the dog faced a choice between putting the dog down and getting the operation. The price represented serious money for them but the alternative was insupportable. When we talked, it had been several years since the operation, and the dog was still with them.

"It was worth it," one of them said. "Worth every penny. But we did get insurance after that, in case it happens again." When I went home that night, I went to the



website of the company that had issued the policy and insured my own dog.

As the old saying goes, “If you want a friend, get a dog.” And it’s true, although more people these days don’t just want a dog, they want one that is special, a *pedigreed* dog. The various breeds each have their distinctive characteristics, which were lovingly described last week at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden, televised in prime time, which is, itself, a measure of our craze for dogs.

There are exotic breeds at the Westminster show. For instance the pharaoh hound, which has, according to the literature, been around for 5,000 years and was bred to course gazelles for the amusement of Egyptian rulers (hence the name). They are handsome indeed, but you wonder just how practical one would be.

This year, three new breeds made their debuts. These would be the pumi, the sloughi, and the American hairless terrier. Cats also made an appearance at the show for the first time. As a kennel club spokesman told NPR, “they’re really just there to have the animals interact with the public.” So it sounds as though the Westminster is making an effort to be nondiscriminatory. After all, a dog show banning cats? That would be rank speciesism.

Not counting the token felines, there were 202 breeds at this year’s show. These included the exceedingly popular breeds such as Labrador retrievers and less popular but noteworthy breeds like the Portuguese water dog—elevated to fame when the Obamas chose two for the White House. These dogs are, ah, excitable, which became embarrassingly evident when just before the president left office last month, one of his dogs bit a girl in the face, leaving a wound that required stitches.

No wonder Labs are more popular. They will make all the water retrieves anyone could ask for, and they don’t bite. They are, in the minds of many dog lovers, simply the best, most companionable dog of all. Yet for some reason, despite their predominance in America, no Lab has ever won the Westminster. For the record, this year’s best in show was a German shepherd with a kind of dutiful intensity and a wonderful name, Rumor.

There are a lot of mistakes made by people who get purebred dogs for what are usually cosmetic reasons. If you settle on a heeler, for instance, and it behaves badly in your apartment, this is likely because the dog wants to be out doing

what it was bred to do; namely, herd sheep. The question of which breed is “right” for someone is fraught with emotion, and people get downright intemperate when dealing with it.

When Jon Katz wrote *The Dogs of Bedlam Farm*, his account of moving from the suburbs to the country and buying a farm with some sheep so his border collie could do what it was genetically programmed to do, he could not have anticipated the success that would follow and that he would only partially enjoy. He eventually had a dog put down after it had bitten several people. This made him a marked man in the digital world after he wrote about it. He Googled “Hating Jon Katz” one day and got over 300,000 hits. (Lest he get a swelled head, he saw that “Hating Justin Bieber” got over 8 million hits.)

I met Katz one evening when he was doing a reading from one of his books. We talked a little, and you couldn’t

miss his feeling for the subject of dogs. But among a certain set of dog lovers, he is Torquemada, which says, I think, more about them than him. More, too, about the tendency in America to go to red alert on just about any matter over which there might be honest disagreement. Even on a seemingly neutral question such as which breed is right for you. Or, for that matter, the even more loaded question of whether one should go with a purebred dog in the first place. What, in other words, about getting a mutt?

This is a minefield. (Is there any aspect of American life, these days, that is *not*?) There are sound arguments for the desirability of mixed-breed dogs. They tend, by definition, to be less susceptible to genetic maladies, like hip dysplasia, which are most commonly found in large purebred dogs, including Labs. But when you consider mixed-breeds, you are often dealing with rescue dogs. And there can be problems if a dog has spent too much time in a shelter. Puppies, it is widely believed, should be socialized to humans beginning around eight weeks of age.

It must be admitted that there is something deeply appealing in taking on a “rescue” dog. We all know *exactly* what the dog is being rescued from, so it is easy to fall into the belief that the dog knows, too, and will therefore be especially loyal and faithful to the person who saved it from certain death.

Silly, perhaps, but only the sternest among us are able to resist a certain amount (or even a lot) of anthropomorphizing. It takes a hardhearted dog owner to believe that his pet is only in it for the homemade dog food



Minnesota veterinary anesthesiologist Krista Peterson, left, disconnects Kelly, a 12-year-old schnauzer, from an IV after the installation of a pacemaker in 2006.



prepared with organic ingredients, that it isn't true love.

And when you see the photographs of the Lab lying next to the flag-draped coffin of his master, a SEAL who was killed in action . . . well, what could it be but real love and real grief? So when someone takes a dog from a shelter, then the dog must know it has been rescued. From that cage if from nothing else.

Maybe this accounts for a sort of trend toward rescuing mutts. You can find, of course, pages on the web devoted to celebrities and their rescue dogs.

So what is it about dogs, one wonders. What is it about dogs, *now*? Why do people by the millions tune in to watch a famous dog show on television? Why do celebrities announce that they own rescue dogs? Why do people prepare organic treats for their dogs? Why do they take them along when they are on business in the city and staying at a hotel?

What gives?

Perhaps it comes back to the old advice about wanting a friend. It is a hard world and getting harder. The digital revolution that was supposed to break down barriers and bring us all together, etc., etc., has, as Jon Katz learned, enabled us to hate one another more efficiently. You can't go on Twitter without finding you have battalions of enemies, most of whom you have never met. That Facebook is based upon connections with your friends is laughable. It can be some of the least friendly terrain in the world: cold, inauthentic, insincere, and often downright hostile.

Between checking your Facebook page and playing with your dog, which prospect brings you more pleasure?

And then there is the social warfare that goes on in so many forms. The gender wars. The p.c. wars. All the nasty little hostilities that have diminished ordinary life and its civilities. Dogs don't play those games. You don't have to watch what you say around your dog.

Dogs provide the kind of unconditional, uncomplicated friendship and affection that is awfully hard to find these days. And, besides that, they don't talk.

I remember interviewing E. O. Wilson several years ago when I was working on a magazine story about him and his magisterial work, *Sociobiology*. We became friendly, in part I suppose, because we had wandered the same swamps and woods of south Alabama as boys. He had been there before me and was interested to learn that not much had changed. Not, anyway, the snapping turtles, water moccasins, and alligators.

Ed (as he insisted I call him) wanted to tell me about a new book he was working on. The subject was something he was calling "biophilia," the tendency of humans to need connections with other forms of life. He used, as an example, the experience of people in old-age facilities when they are visited by dogs. "There is, inevitably, an improvement in their outlook and morale," he said.

I told him that I knew this firsthand from having taken my young daughter and her Lab to the local assisted-living facility and seeing the looks on those old, tired faces. The dog seemed, almost, to bring them back to life. I didn't have a name for it, then.

Perhaps that is all it comes down to. Dogs make us feel better and, for reasons we don't quite understand, we have never been quite so in need of that. Then again, maybe the American thing for dogs is just another case of our thinking

we have reinvented the wheel because it needed to be reinvented. Dogs have been around a long time. We sort of evolved together.

And the feeling for dogs runs through the purest record of humanity's long trek, namely, its literature, going all the way back to Homer, who recounts Argos waiting faithfully 20 years for the return of his master, Odysseus. And when that is done, the dog dies.

Which is, of course, what often happens to dogs in literature. Old

Yeller must be put down for rabies. Lion, in Faulkner's story "The Bear," cannot survive his wounds. And then, there is the dog that doesn't die—Buck, in Jack London's *Call of the Wild*. After his master dies, he returns to his natural state, as part of a wolf pack.

The literary dog dies so often because that is the way it happens in life. As Rudyard Kipling rhymed it,

There is sorrow enough in the natural way  
From men and women to fill our day;  
And when we are certain of sorrow in store,  
Why do we always arrange for more?  
*Brothers and sisters, I bid you beware*  
*Of giving your heart to a dog to tear.*  
Buy a pup and your money will buy  
Love unflinching that cannot lie—  
Perfect passion and worship fed  
By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.  
*Nevertheless it is hardly fair*  
*To risk your heart for a dog to tear.*

Maybe we just can't help ourselves. Because we need a friend. ♦



Hamburg, Germany, pet psychiatrist  
Imke Wirth with a patient in 2004



*'Disputation Between Martin Luther and Johann Eck at the Pleissenburg in Leipzig' by Karl Friedrich Lessing (1867)*

# Great Awakening

*A glittering collection of Reformation essays.* BY ANDREW PETTEGREE

**F**ive hundred years ago, an obscure German churchman named Martin Luther issued a call for debate on an abstruse aspect of late medieval theology. From that mundane event followed a sequence of cascading consequences that would divide the Western Catholic tradition and leave a legacy, Protestantism, that

*Andrew Pettegree, professor of modern history at the University of St Andrews, is the author, most recently, of* Brand Luther: How an Unheralded Monk Turned His Small Town into a Center of Publishing, Made Himself the Most Famous Man in Europe—and Started the Protestant Reformation.

**All Things Made New**  
*The Reformation and Its Legacy*  
by Diarmaid MacCulloch  
Oxford, 464 pp., \$29.95

would profoundly shape our society. At the time, all this would have seemed deeply improbable. Martin Luther, an intense scholar employed in a recently founded university in a small town in northeastern Germany, Wittenberg, was not at all well known. The town itself was a community of some 2,000 souls far distant from Europe's main centers of power and influence. But sometimes the stars

align to propel the most unlikely figures onto the public stage.

In Luther's case, events conspired to give his quixotic campaign against the sale of indulgences a public hearing. The church authorities failed in their efforts to have Luther quietly silenced. And Luther discovered a rare talent for writing, appealing over the heads of his fellow churchmen to address a public audience never previously mobilized to debate matters of theology. When Luther was condemned for his refusal to submit to the judgement of his superiors, he fought back, articulating a whole alternative structure of belief. When he died in 1546, half of Germany was

irrevocably lost to Roman Catholicism, and a whole new faith was born.

Martin Luther was a man of special talent, but it is hard to conceive his movement without the magnifying power of print. When Luther was born in 1483 the art of printing was in its infancy. Yet in 1517 Luther—a man who, into his mid-thirties, had published nothing—somehow intuitively understood the way to galvanize this miraculous new technology, turning out a mass of short tracts, 2,000 or 3,000 words long, written in an easy, accessible style. Many of his early writings are no longer than this review, and sold as separate books, they galvanized a mass movement. This was a revolution in communication as much as content. Critics were caught flatfooted, scandalized by his daring, and unwilling to follow him into such dangerously populist territory. By the time they found their voices, Luther's could not be stifled.

The Reformation was born, and so was a whole new scholarly industry: writing about it. Even in Luther's lifetime, writing the Reformation's own history became a fundamental task for its supporters, for the Catholic gibe—"Where was your church before Luther?"—urgently required an answer. So Protestant divines wrote to give their new church a lineage, rooting it in the tradition of the early church; and one way or another, they have been at it ever since. For the Reformation was, as it turned out, a defining moment of European history, the first public international media event as well as a theological revolution. When I began my professional career, the Reformation was one of the hottest topics in historical writing, emerging as a subject for scientific analysis from the relative neglect of church history in the decades following the Second World War.

Diarmaid MacCulloch was one of the brightest and best of those who applied themselves to the reinterpretation of the Reformation and its consequences in the last quarter of the 20th century. After the then-obligatory local study—in MacCulloch's case, a scintillating study of the progress of Reformation in Suffolk—he first came

to prominence with an award-winning biography of Thomas Cranmer, the retiring academic who made himself useful to Henry VIII in the matter of Henry's divorce and then, somehow, negotiated the multiple perils of Tudor court politics to leave an enduring legacy as the architect of the English Protestant tradition. This was followed by a definitive study of the Protestant movement and a milestone interpretation of Christianity itself.

Along the way, most prolific scholars leave a crumb trail of smaller works, published conference papers, thought-pieces for academic journals, and announcements of archival discoveries. Here, in *All Things Made New*, MacCulloch has gathered together a carefully chosen selection of these shorter writings, in what turns out to be a remarkably coherent and consistently stimulating collection. Because MacCulloch writes so well, what would be an indulgence for many becomes a powerfully thoughtful reflection on both the foundations of the Protestant tradition and the very purpose of academic scholarship.

Diarmaid MacCulloch's writing has always been marked out by its range of references, from the Apostles to the modern-day church, and this is fully on display in this glittering collection. And it is good to be reminded that his broad understanding of the quarrelsome families of Christendom extends far beyond the Western tradition of Catholics and Protestants. In the bravura opening essay, he reminds us that when at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the discussions broke up without consensus, the refuseniks amounted to two-thirds of the Christian community of the day. These African and Middle Eastern churches have been embattled ever since, denounced as heretics by the European churches and almost submerged by the advance of Islam. But they deserve their place in the Christian story, and MacCulloch ensures that they have it.

In this, as in so much of *All Things Made New*, MacCulloch asks us to keep an open mind for the contingencies

of history, the road not taken, and the events that did *not* occur. The disaster, as he sees it, of Chalcedon "shifted the whole Christian story westwards towards medieval Europe. That has obscured this greatest of might-have-beens in the Christian story, that of Baghdad becoming the center of gravity in Christianity rather than Rome."

MacCulloch, as becomes abundantly clear, is no great admirer of Rome and its pretensions to universal authority: Most of the essays in this volume were written during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, so we have little chance to see whether the election of Pope Francis will have altered these perspectives. But his detestation of fundamentalism, of a mean-minded, judgmental spirit that makes a mockery of the Christian teaching of compassion and forgiveness, is quite ecumenical. MacCulloch likes nothing better than to tweak the noses of those whose entrenched beliefs are based on bad history and shallow understanding of the scriptures. Thus he reminds us, twice, that few Christians in the early modern period would have objected to slavery "because the predominant voices in the books of the Bible accept slavery as part of the God-given fabric of the world. Now it is the other way round: not a single Christian alive, I think, would defend slavery, and so in this respect, all Christianity is now out of alignment with the Bible."

This lesson in the perils of biblical literalism could easily be applied to the debates on sexuality and gender equality that have poisoned the life of so many Christian churches in the last two generations, and MacCulloch leaves little doubt that he believes that it should be.

As this example shows, MacCulloch also has a well-developed sense of mischief. I have never before heard John Calvin's installation as pastor in Geneva compared with the establishment of the Anabaptist kingdom of Münster. But MacCulloch develops the parallel with some gusto. Far from this being turned to Calvin's disadvantage, the Genevan reformer turns out to be rather a hero of this book, praised for a lucid pragmatism that allowed him to



recognize theological differences with the Swiss reformers of Zurich, and yet to work to a shared statement of eucharistic belief.

“All too rarely in the 16th century,” he writes, “did theologians acknowledge that they had substantial differences, but then go on to produce a joint statement which both sides could find acceptable.” The desire that this should be a model for modern Christian confessions—committed in principle to unity but fixated on what divides them—hangs unspoken in the air.

These opening pieces on the world Christian tradition are expansive and magisterial, though it is no surprise that most of the essays gathered here are devoted to the British church in the era of the Reformation, for this is where the bulk of MacCulloch’s scholarly work has been concentrated. Much of this was originally published as extended essays in the *London Review of Books*, and here MacCulloch lets rip with some of his most extravagant phrase-making, though it is hard to quarrel with the judgments.

When Henry VII claimed the throne in 1485 and began the Tudor line, he did so with a ridiculously weak claim to be heir to what was, indeed, a “failed cross-channel state” laid low by weak kings and the aristocratic bloodbath of the Wars of the Roses. The peripheral importance of the British Isles in the politics of 16th-century Europe is another constant theme, although (as MacCulloch willingly admits) this makes the achievement of the Tudor monarchy, in positioning England as an emerging great power, all the more noteworthy.

Amidst the slightly teasing asides—was Poland-Lithuania really one of Europe’s big three powers?—two persistent themes shine through in his analysis of the English Reformation. First, MacCulloch inveighs against the undervaluation of the extraordinarily radical experiment in Reformation undertaken during the reign of Edward VI. Submerged during the Catholic revival under Mary, the Edwardian church emerged in full bloom in the Elizabethan Settlement, staffed in its entirety by those who had

weathered the Marian years either in continental exile or, more perilously like Elizabeth herself, in England. In the circumstances, it was no surprise that Elizabeth preferred the company that had shared her experience of uncomfortable accommodation and disliked the smug piety of those who had sat it out in Strasbourg or Geneva. But her church settlement was no less Protestant for that, and this essential fact has been obscured largely thanks to 19th-century Anglo-Catholics, who had their own reasons for eliding the fact that England sat in a mainstream Reformed tradition.

MacCulloch’s second major achievement is that he re-roots the English experience in the wider, larger fields of continental religious thought. And because he does so with the authority of someone who has studied and understood European Protestantism, he can obliterate one of the most persistent myths of English history: that

the developing Anglican tradition (a term that was never used at the time) represents, in some respect, a “third way” between Catholicism and Protestantism. It was not; it was a forthrightly Protestant church, and this tediously persistent example of English exceptionalism should now be dead and buried.

This is a hugely readable book, sustained throughout by Diarmaid MacCulloch’s marvelous instinct for the quirky and the original. Who would have thought that the only layman not of royal blood to be prayed for by name in the Book of Common Prayer would have been Sir James Croft, Lord Deputy of Ireland? But there he is, in the Dublin edition of 1551. Reading *All Things Made New* brings home an essential truth: that one can be funny, playful, and mildly seditious—and still be learned and authoritative. It is a lesson that academics need constantly to relearn. ♦



# That’s Infotainment

*Where to find America’s largest land vehicular tunnel and more.* BY JAY COST

**T**wenty-five years ago, I was a scrawny, short, flat-footed child with an irrepressible competitive streak. Sports, obviously, were out of the question. But fortunately for me, my school had a program called Academic Games. We’d play six competitive games against other schools on the local, state, and national levels—testing our knowledge of mathematics, logic, language, history, rhetoric, and current events.

As a writer who presumes to comment on what is happening in the world today, I’m embarrassed to admit that “World Card” (the current

**The World Almanac  
and Book of Facts 2017**  
edited by Sarah Janssen  
World Almanac, 1,008 pp., \$14.99

events game) was hardly my best. But I think it was entrapment: To prepare for that game, we were issued copies of *The World Almanac*, a thousand-page trove of all manner of information. Tasked with reading up on what happened over the past 12 months, my 13-year-old self would, instead, wander aimlessly through the amazing pages of this tome, which seemed to have an answer for any question that popped into my head. When Game Day finally arrived, I was ready to tell you the circumference of the

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at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

moon but had forgotten who had the top-selling pop single of 1992.

Alas, useful books such as these seem to be going the way of the dinosaurs, replaced by the Internet. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is digital only; the *World Book Encyclopedia* is still available, but nobody will be coming to your door to try to sell it to you. For a while, it seemed as though the Internet age would even destroy *The Almanac of American Politics*, although thankfully it found a new print home. So imagine my surprise when I discovered that *The World Almanac* is still in print, and still as great as ever. This 2017 edition is an impressive 1,008 pages long, chockfull of all manner of facts, figures, and dates.

Need to know what the Thirty Years' War was? Turn to page 171: "1618-1648. A series of religious and political conflicts involving most countries of Western Europe." Curious how much tuition costs at Emory University? Page 424 has the answer: It's \$47,954 per year (room and board cost an extra \$13,486). How about the largest land vehicular tunnel in the United States? Page 725 tells us about the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel in Whittier, Alaska, where "vehicles and trains take turns using the tunnel's one lane." How about the number of battle deaths in the War of 1812? There were 2,260 (page 170).

*The World Almanac* is a marvel of organization. How do the editors manage to stuff so much information into such a small package, and yet present it in a readable, and reasonably accessible, way? Data are easy to find, and the write-ups are brilliantly concise. And the best part is that, when you find the fact you're looking for, you'll find some *other* useful fact, and then another, and then another—and the next thing you know, you're totally unprepared for your World Card tournament.

As a Generation Xer, my formative years straddle the dawning of the Internet age, which I've long considered a blessing. Unlike the baby boomers, I'm quite comfortable with learning how to use new technology; unlike the millennials, I still appreciate the old way of doing things. By virtue of my date

of birth, I know that newer is often, but not always, better.

*The World Almanac* is an example of the superiority of old over new, of paper over megabytes. Its main competitor is Wikipedia, which is in truth a terrible resource. Wikipedia is unreliable, with spotty, nonexistent, or lousy sourcing. And it's hopelessly unbalanced—not just politically, but socially and culturally. You can find a detailed bio of virtually every *Simpsons* character but good luck finding much on New York's old Sen. Robert F. Wagner (1877-1953). Its writing is uneven, and not just in sentence construction but also in what information is and is not presented. Wikipedia is exactly what you would expect from a website constructed by underem-

ployed know-it-alls who lack strong editorial guidance.

*The World Almanac* is none of these things. It is trustworthy, balanced, and well-written. Wikipedia's sole advantage is that you can find entries with one click while you have to thumb through a few pages of the *Almanac*. But that strikes me as a worthwhile price to pay for what is, in truth, a manifestly better product. And all this for \$14.99. What a bargain!

I'm going to take Wikipedia off my bookmarks tab and keep my *World Almanac* handy for the next time I need to know the address of the Department of Justice, or how a cyclone works, or weight guidelines for adults, or the number of local schools in Texas, or where Warren Beatty was born, or . . . ♦

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# Bandaged Wounds

*Modern war, in memory and imagery.*

BY JAMES MATTHEW WILSON

**I** don't believe in ghosts that come rattling to your bedside," says the Canadian photojournalist Paul Watson in this haunting new book. "Because truth is I live with one."

In October 1993, Watson was on the ground in Mogadishu when the body of an American serviceman, William David Cleveland, was dragged through the streets and desecrated by a Somali mob. Watson clicked his shutter on Cleveland's death, and the resultant photos won him a Pulitzer Prize. They would also frighten the Clinton administration into beating a hasty retreat from its intervention in Somalia. From that moment on, Watson would hear Cleveland's voice in his

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## New Life

*Poems*

by Dan O'Brien

Hanging Loose Press, 124 pp., \$18

head: *If you do this I will own you forever.*

In 2007, Dan O'Brien heard Watson interviewed about his experiences as a journalist in war-racked countries. He felt a curious kinship with the reporter, and wrote to him. Their resulting correspondence led to friendship, to the writing of O'Brien's critically acclaimed play *The Body of an American* (2014), about the traumatic aftermath of Watson's infamous picture, and also to a book of poems, *War Reporter* (2013). The material of play and poems alike is, in part, faithful journalistic transcription, with the poet chiefly shaping the form and order of what he has been given. O'Brien sought to reproduce not just the spectacle imprinted forever by Watson's

camera, but the effect of those images as they were burned into Watson's memory and pursued him ever after.

The reality of war and the uncanny, unpredictable power of the representations of war grip and circle about one another in Watson's life and in O'Brien's work, neither capable of letting go. What is true for these men is true for the world: The American retreat Watson's photograph inadvertently provoked would embolden al Qaeda. What once looked like the United States extricating itself from a quagmire on the East African coast now appears to us as a prelude to the war on terror and a first eruption of the anarchic violence that has now overtaken the Middle East.

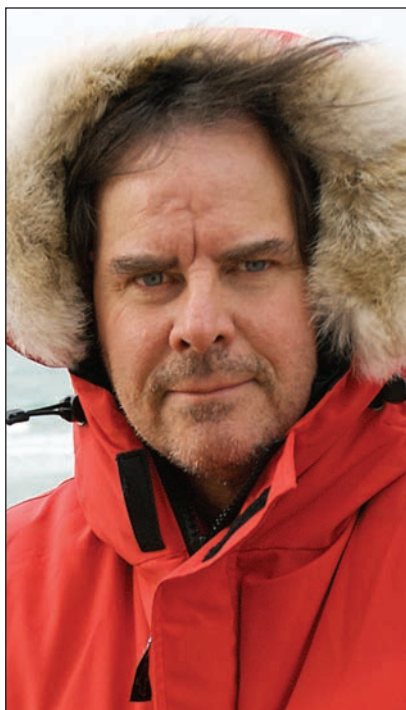
It may have been inevitable that O'Brien should return to his subject in *New Life*. The publisher's description tells us that this latest volume of poems picks up where the previous one left off, with the Arab Spring—and this is, in a sense, true. In the early pages, we encounter episodes of Muammar Qaddafi's maniacal reign in Libya now buried in dust, Bashar al-Assad's bombardment of Aleppo, Watson's musing on the prospect of being "beheaded in Syria," Afghan refugees visiting Niagara Falls, the reporter's first-hand account of the protests in Tahrir Square. O'Brien captures the sprawling scope of terror and uprising as it spreads from failed state to failed state by concentrating it all into brief narrative fragments, shrapnel scattered in the dust.

But as William Faulkner wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." O'Brien's fascination with Watson lay not so much in the choice Watson made one day in Mogadishu as in the way he (and we) live with it still: "Dear Dan," we find Watson writing, "sometimes my flashbacks arrive like neatly stacked rhymes in a bad poem."

Much as rhyme forms an alogical string of resonances as words pass in a column and down a page, each one summoning in memory of what we had thought was left behind us, so *New Life* leaps between present and past to form a collage of visions and voices, at the center of which are



Dan O'Brien



Paul Watson

the two men: Watson trying to make peace not only with what he has seen but with the willfulness and excuses of professionalism that led to the seeing; and O'Brien working over the materials of the reporter's life again and again, unable to dissolve the mystery it refuses to surrender.

"Why do I write back to you? Why do you write to me?" we hear late in the volume. But the answer has already been given—on the first page:

I don't want to do this. No. We have to do this. Yes. We have to do this until we don't.

The refusal of the past to go away, it seems, is the only explanation for the present. Woven through all of this are the ambitions of both men to carve a future for themselves from the materials of the past. O'Brien's wife is pregnant with their first child, and he needs to figure out how to make for her a "splendid world." Watson, meanwhile, confronts an age where war reporters are as useful to ISIS dead as alive. "Why *should* I risk my life?" he asks, "They're just going to upload [their atrocities] to YouTube anyway."

Indeed, Watson's employers have concluded that insuring a reporter in a war zone is not so much too dangerous as too expensive—one more sign that the life of journalism is not what it used to be. Where "once there'd been like these feeding frenzies of men in vast cacophonous pens," Watson sighs, "now you see coffee-stained carpets and huddled masses of mourners wishing farewells to colleagues quitting or fired."

O'Brien and Watson plot a prudent course. They take a meeting with Hollywood executives and pitch a television series called *The Zone*. A female character will have a taste for "combat sex." Perhaps the protagonist will have inclinations of his own. In truth, they do not know what the plot will be, the moral is "ambiguous," and at last, one perky executive cuts them off: No less than war reporting, war stories "cost too much."

Dan O'Brien's style is at once an obstacle and a thing of genius. At every opportunity he flattens his authorial voice to that of amanuensis—most of the sections include Watson-the-war-reporter doing something or other—and one poem startles us with rhymed couplets, as if to accentuate the telegraphic style of the rest, where only the juxtaposition of past and present brings order to what

TOP: DAVID BORNFIELD / DANOBRIEN.ORG; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF PAUL WATSON



otherwise would seem to be passively recorded details.

Another poem, in which the photographer Lynsey Addario recounts her kidnapping in Syria, during which she was subject to sexual abuse, ends with something like a sententious moral: “I won’t talk to anybody who can’t understand what it’s like to be a woman at war.” However just, such a tidy summary statement falls flat and, to my mind, provides the final justification for O’Brien’s whole technique. Even the raw facts of war come to us packaged and neatly summed up, no less in newspaper headlines and videos on telephone screens than in Hollywood blockbusters.

To capture Watson’s inability to reduce experience to memory, to dampen his sense of guilt with the repetition

of platitudes, to reflect in a faithful way the blunt mystery of war and the mediation of the present by the past, reality by representation, moral seriousness by frivolity in pursuit of a buck, Dan O’Brien has contrived a narrative at once postmodern montage and old-fashioned history. Straight narration would have been too easy; it would allow us to settle into the comfort of spectators, and the messiness of war into the easy moral or self-righteous pronouncement.

Can such a work as *New Life* accomplish what Watson desires, can “the imagination . . . lift one out of this post-traumatic slough” and make sense of everything? Watson himself provides us the answer: “Ha ha ha.” Poetry does not do therapy. It only winds and rewinds the truth until we see it straight. ♦

dot of noon on New Year’s Day, the first trains rolled into the new stations.

In the history of infrastructure, there may never have been a greater, or more heartfelt, expression of collective elation than greeted this opening of the Second Avenue Subway. And while it is true that the new trains run for a mere mile-and-a-half between 96th Street and 63rd Street before veering west along the preestablished Q line (with entirely new stations at 96th, 86th, and 72nd Streets and a largely revamped station at 63rd), no one was in any mood to complain. Apparently money has already been earmarked to extend the line north to 125th Street in Harlem, while the timetable for its ultimate extension southward to the Wall Street area is anyone’s guess.

The new stations look very different from all the others in New York’s subway system. Rather than using the cut-and-cover method preferred in most of the older stations, with tracks just below street level, these tunnels have been dug deep into the earth and so are not supported by a forest of columns that dangerously impede movement. Instead, the stations are dominated by broad, freestanding barrel vaults that are almost as elegantly designed as the best stations in Paris, London, and Washington. They are spacious, open, and well lit, rather than narrow, dark, and menacing. And no small part of their charm comes from their inspired use of visual art.

Of course, New York is the art capital of the world, and so it seems fitting that the city should have enlisted some of the local talent to adorn the new stations. Is there a touch of pretension involved in hiring vanguardists like Chuck Close, Vik Muniz, and Sarah Sze to adorn a subway station? Probably. But if we could have done a little better, we could surely have done far worse: Each station has been transformed into a one-off gallery or museum in which the art is so site-specific that the real achievement is neither the art nor the architecture but, rather, that third thing that emerges from their happy juxtaposition.

The best of the stations, in this regard, is the one on 72nd Street,

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# Underground Art

*Chuck Close and friends take the Second Avenue Subway.* BY JAMES GARDNER

*New York*  
**C**ontrary to what you may have heard, nothing is possible in New York City. Indeed, the bigger the project, the more impossible it becomes. But surely there has been no greater symbol of just how much can’t be done in New York than the storied Second Avenue Subway that was planned for Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

For nearly a century, we had heard rumors, and occasionally even the stirrings, of this accursed chimera. Generations of New Yorkers were born and have passed away waiting for the Second Avenue Subway that, like so many trains in our overtaxed subway system, was always scheduled and never came. As in some interminable litigation conceived by Dickens, this one project

has been debated since 1919, and over the course of that century, money has been allocated and withdrawn several times. On one occasion, almost fully half a century ago, Mayor John Lindsay and Governor Nelson Rockefeller even showed up in hard hats and tossed a few shovelfuls of dirt to indicate that ground had been broken. But they, too, passed away, and still nothing was ever done.

But then, in 2007, work actually *did* begin—and this time, it continued, although with such slow, tortuous progress that the locals started to fear that it would never end. The stores and restaurants along Second Avenue were no proof against the onslaught of tunneling devices, explosives, and hard-hat brigades. Many of them went out of business. But that century of frustration and travail—not to mention a \$4.3 billion price tag—suddenly seemed a distant memory when, on the

*James Gardner’s latest book is Buenos Aires: The Biography of a City.*



*Portrait of Lou Reed by Chuck Close*

which has been given over to the mosaicized photographic images of Muniz. As befits the egalitarian, one-city spirit of such projects, the full spectrum of contemporary urban existence has been delightfully depicted on the white porcelain walls of the station: A father and child with balloons, society women, a turbaned Sikh, a gay couple, and a middle-aged man running after papers that have flown out of his attaché case—they are all here. Beyond the work's choice and abundant detail, its chief artistic pleasure is that shock of recognition that we feel in seeing our neighbors transformed into mosaics as virtuosic as those of Venice or Ravenna.

Chuck Close's intervention in the 86th Street station is somewhat more vexatious, although it, too, is memorable in its way. The artist has simply reworked in mosaic some of his famous massive heads, which rise from floor to ceiling and confront the public in a way that, by design, feels almost authoritar-

ian. Some of the portraits, going back decades, depict anonymous men and women, while others are of Philip Glass, Lou Reed, and the painter Alex Katz. It is odd to find two portraits of Close himself, glaring down at passengers, Oz-like and unavoidable. But no matter how often you have seen the original paintings, there is something about their translation into mosaics that is immensely appealing, and few straphangers will be able to resist running their hands across these glistening surfaces.

I confess that Sarah Sze, up on 96th Street, leaves me a little cold. She alone has eschewed mosaics in favor of something resembling deep-blue biscuit ware, or terra-cotta, to form waves of papers sweeping from one end of the station to the other. Whatever this may or may not mean, it is visually underwhelming—as is the hyperactive vortex of lines and shapes that she designed for the above-ground

entrances to the station. Unlike the other artists involved, Sze is primarily a sculptor and installation artist, and clearly those media suit her more than the flat surface of a wall.

Finally, I should mention the more modest intervention of Jean Shin at the 63rd Street station, where a series of endearing vignettes, conceived as grisaille mosaics, have been inspired by old photographs of the New York immigrant experience, circa 1900.

To preserve the hard-won unity of design and conception that dominates each of these stations, the New York's Metropolitan Transit Authority has banished all advertising and concession outlets, and even the ubiquitous buskers have been unceremoniously removed. Such measures add an air of order, approaching sterility at times, to these gleaming new spaces. Now if only the MTA could get more trains into the stations, New York would feel and function like a First World city. ♦

GARY HERSHORN / GETTY IMAGES



# Kraus Revisited

*The man with the last word on the  
'war to end all wars.'* BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

Vienna in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a hotbed of genius, and the arch-journalist, poet, and playwright Karl Kraus (1874-1936) presided over this efflorescence of art and thought, knowing everything and everybody, making all the right friends and all the right enemies. From 1899 until his death, Kraus edited *Die Fackel* (the *Torch*) and for many years was the sole contributor to this landmark journal, which appeared whenever some gross fatuity in public life or telling grotesquerie in the daily press inflamed him—and which, on an especially inauspicious occasion, might run to some 300 pages of closely argued and eviscerating animadversion.

His admirers were legion, as one learns from Edward Timms's recent masterly intellectual biography. Freud wrote him fan letters in praise of his enlightened attitude toward sexuality; Kraus, in turn, congratulated Freud for recognizing that homosexuality ought not to be considered criminal or insane. (In due course Kraus soured on Freudian theory, and his most famous aphorism declares that "psychoanalysis is the mental illness for which it claims to be a cure.")

The modernist architect Adolf Loos, who disdained ornament and was bemused by the way Kraus excavated elemental truths buried in everyday palaver, designed the starkly elegant covers for Kraus's books. The Expressionist artist Oscar Kokoschka

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illustrated an apocalyptic Kraus essay with a lithograph of subhuman hordes poised to descend upon an overripe Europe. For Frank Wedekind, author of the scarifying Lulu plays, Kraus



Karl Kraus (1928)

produced (and played a small role in) *Pandora's Box*, and the two friends took turns with the beautiful actress who starred in the show.

Alban Berg, whose opera *Lulu* was based on Wedekind's plays, wrote to Anton Webern: "Oh the *Fackel*! I know it off by heart! I worship every line by this man Kraus—even if it's printed on the cover!" Webern applied Kraus's theory of language to his own prescrip-

tions for musical composition, and the atonal crowd was unanimous in its appreciation, as Arnold Schoenberg pronounced Kraus "a truly great man." Gershom Scholem and Walter Benjamin spent hours in their student days discussing the origins of Kraus's manner of multilayered commentary in medieval Hebrew writings; Scholem continued his subscription to *Die Fackel* when he emigrated to Palestine, and Benjamin wrote a celebrated essay on Kraus.

Elias Canetti, who couldn't understand the fuss at first, soon became a Kraus devotee, "filled with him as with a Bible. I did not doubt a single word he said. . . . It was only in him that you find justice—no, you didn't find justice, he *was* justice."

Of Kraus's monumental play *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*), Canetti recalls hearing, when he first arrived in Vienna, that it "contain[ed] everything that had happened in the war." To contain the entire Great War took Kraus some 600 pages and over 500 characters. He started work in 1915 and wrote most of it during the war, but could not begin publication in *Die Fackel* until the war was lost and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had fallen. The play appeared as a book in 1922. In 2015 the entire play—*The Last Days of Mankind*, translated by Fred Bridgham and Edward Timms (Yale, 672 pp., \$40)—was published in English, a signal event in the literary history of the First World War.

*The Last Days of Mankind* was intended to be the last word on the "war to end all wars"—a phrase and concept Kraus subjects to a thorough mauling. As Kraus states in his preface, "The performance of this drama, which would take some 10 evenings in terrestrial time, is intended for a theatre on Mars. Theatre-goers on planet earth would find it unendurable." For Martians, presumably, the spectacle would be a lesson in primitive zoology, describing the vilest creature the universe has brought forth; human beings could only be



disgusted with the sight of themselves.

The opening scene recalls *War and Peace*: As in an aristocratic St. Petersburg drawing room in 1805, with Napoleon greedily eyeing Russia, so on a busy Vienna streetcorner in 1914, with newsboys proclaiming the outbreak of war, the eternal and inevitable chatter about momentous events is inter-

is stupefied by official and semi-official discourse, reducing matters of life and death to formulaic nonsense.

Morally, the worst of the war is on the home front. Kraus contrasts the horror of soldiers' suffering with the whining of prosperous civilians who see war as their main chance to make a killing. The ironies are obvi-

military mind bursting with stupidity:

At this time we think fondly of our loved ones back home—who are far away and thinking of us with faithful devotion. Especially the mothers who have set us an example—joyfully sacrificing their sons on the altar of the Fatherland, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. . . . Victory, gentlemen—do you know what that means? It is the choice a soldier has—if he doesn't want to die covered with glory!

Much of *The Last Days of Mankind* is drawn straight from life; Kraus witnessed some of these scenes, read or heard these unspeakable words: Antic, astringent, icy, overheated, on the edge of tears, on the verge of hysteria, he tells the unendurable truth. At the play's end, the factual truth is stretched a bit so that Kraus's version of the moral truth might emerge: After the editor of the premier Vienna newspaper announces himself to be Lord of the Hyenas and the Antichrist, a Martian ray annihilates all mankind, as the Voice of God protests, "THIS IS NOT WHAT I INTENDED."

Kraus's lethal vision puts *The Last Days of Mankind* on the shelf of Great War classics among *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Goodbye to All That*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, and the poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. But what does that distinction amount to? These are the books that shaped the thinking and feeling of civilized men between the two world wars. And in so doing, they constitute a canon of the ineffectual.

In 1933, Kraus wrote an anti-Hitler essay entitled *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht* ("The Third Walpurgis Night"), but he never published it. Did he fear for his life—or like his alter-ego, the Grumbler in *Last Days*, was he afraid that his words would prove useless? After Engelbert Dollfuss, the Austrian chancellor who was his country's surest stay against absorption by Germany, was assassinated in 1934, Karl Kraus gave up writing about politics. *Die Fackel* was devoted henceforth to studies of Shakespeare and Offenbach. And Kraus died in 1936, before he could see the worst. ♦



Pauline Clément and Denis Podalydès in the Paris production of *'The Last Days of Mankind'* (2016)

persed with chatter about matters of no consequence—in Kraus's rendering, the clamor for a passing operetta star's autograph, and a ruffian trying to snatch a prostitute's handbag. All the talk is pointedly uncomprehending: The inadequacy of understanding, the failure to see what is being done in the name of imperial honor and glory but is actually perpetrated in the service of avarice—that will be Kraus's major theme.

In this age of grandeur, Austria-Hungary and Germany stand shoulder to shoulder, fighting a defensive war forced upon them to uphold true culture against the predations of rapacious shopkeeper-nations. Kraus presents the drivel of mindless speech and writing, as everyone reaches for the ready-made phrase nearest at hand. The populace

ous, and formulaic: For example, a Big Eater and a Normal Eater commiserating about the lack of really good restaurant chow, ignoring the starving beggar who pleads for a crust.

The fact that Kraus flays noncombatants for their greed and lack of compassion, however, does not mean that he spares the fighting men. The officer class comprises psychopathic morons and moronic psychopaths; martinets pitched to frenzy at the failings of common soldiers consign clueless offenders to suicidal frontline duty. At a ceremonial banquet at corps headquarters, before a colossal painting of the emperor and his chiefs of staff on some imaginary battlefield, an Austrian general's malapropisms, slips of the tongue, and fractured logic betray a

# Surprise Ending

*The second time around the lightning doesn't strike.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



*Keanu Reeves and friend at the Brooklyn Bridge*

Every now and then a movie comes out of nowhere to surprise you. It's usually a small-scale piece of genre work whose own producers are likely so relieved just to have it done and get it released that they don't really know they might have something special on their hands. Last year's big surprise was *Hell or High Water*, a bank-robber film about which nobody knew anything until it suddenly appeared—and you knew from the first moment you saw a getaway car making its way through the back alleys of a dusty West Texas town that you were seeing something fresh and unexpected. It's a Best Picture nominee—the least likely Best Picture nominee in many years.

The 2015 surprise was *The Gift*, the writing and directing debut of the actor Joel Edgerton—a three-character suspense thriller so perfectly calibrated that it scared you and unnerved you like clockwork until a final twist that

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## John Wick: Chapter 2

Directed by Chad Stahelski



you didn't know was even necessary left you stunned in your seat.

And in 2014, there was *John Wick*, with Keanu Reeves as a retired hit man mourning the loss of the wife for whom he went straight. To call the movie hardboiled would be an understatement; more people die in *John Wick* than in many small wars, and all because a stupid Russian gangster kills the title character's dog. The shooting and fighting scenes are startlingly interesting because the directors Chad Stahelski and David Leitch chose to film them in long unbroken takes rather than chop them up into thousands of shots the way most modern action movies do it. They are like Busby Berkeley ultraviolence. And to top it off, screenwriter Derek Kolstad invented an amusingly detailed secret criminal world parallel to our own, in

which bad guys are members of private clubs and hotels where they can buy their goods with Krugerrands and have some nice downtime socializing with each other.

*John Wick* is the definition of a guilty pleasure. Now there is *John Wick: Chapter 2*, and judging from the good box-office numbers, many of the people who were delighted by the discovery of the original *John Wick* are flocking to the theater to see if they can have the same experience. So did I. Alas, as the Ghost of Daffy Duck said on the vaudeville stage when he finally scored enormous applause by blowing himself up: "I can only do it once." You can only surprise an audience with an out-of-nowhere sleeper once.

John Wick kills more people in this one, and goes to Rome for about 20 minutes to kill more people, and then returns to New York to evade being killed by a lot of other people. The contrast between the barely breathing Keanu Reeves at rest and the startlingly dynamic Keanu Reeves in motion was thrilling in the first picture but is nothing new now.

The problem, it turns out, is that having seen the first chapter, you know all there is to learn. You already know the sad guy with the dog is the world's most skilled killer. You already know that he has this trick where he immobilizes another guy's gun arm, uses it to shoot a second guy, then turns the gun on the guy holding it and kills him, too. You know that the underworld hangs out at a lavish and old-fashioned hotel on Wall Street called the Continental, and that the glorious Ian McShane is its dashing and all-knowing proprietor. You didn't know that there was a branch of the Continental in Rome, where the 1960s Italian movie icon Franco Nero is the manager, but it's just more of the same.

The same screenwriter, Derek Krolstad, tries to freshen up the proceedings by adding new elements to the complex criminal "mythology" of the original—for example, that many of New York City's homeless are actually working for a mastermind who communicates by pigeon. But that's a little labored. ♦



**"President Trump and the Republican National Committee observe Abraham Lincoln's birthday with a fake Lincoln quote: 'And in the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.'"**  
—News item

**PARODY**

## TRUMP'S FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
[1564-1616]

Yorick! What a guy. What an amazing human being. This Yorick—we go back. He must have carried me, like, piggyback a thousand times—maybe more. And now look at him!

*Hamlet, Act V, Scene I*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN  
[1706-1790]

Schmidt's of Philadelphia is the one beer to have when you're having more than one.

*Poor Richard's Almanack*  
(1733)

THOMAS A. EDISON  
[1847-1931]

How many lobbyists does it take to screw in a light bulb? I don't know, but 1 percent do it for inspiration and 99 percent do it with perspiration—or something. I don't know.

*Autobiography*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON  
[1803-1882]

If you build it they will come, and beat a path to your door.

*Journal*

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE  
[1805-1859]

[The Americans] can put a man on the moon, but what they really need is a good five-cent cigar.

*Democracy in America* (1835)

THOMAS JEFFERSON  
[1743-1826]

I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just incredible. Totally incredible.

*Notes on the State of Virginia*  
(1785)

HENRY FORD  
[1863-1947]

Fifteen minutes can save you 15 percent or more on your car insurance.

*Speech, Detroit Chamber of Commerce* (1928)

GEORGE S. PATTON  
[1885-1945]

War is hell, okay? And what good is it, anyway? Believe me, some people are gonna die for their country. But the main thing is to make the other poor you-know-what die for his country.

*Address to troops* (1943)